

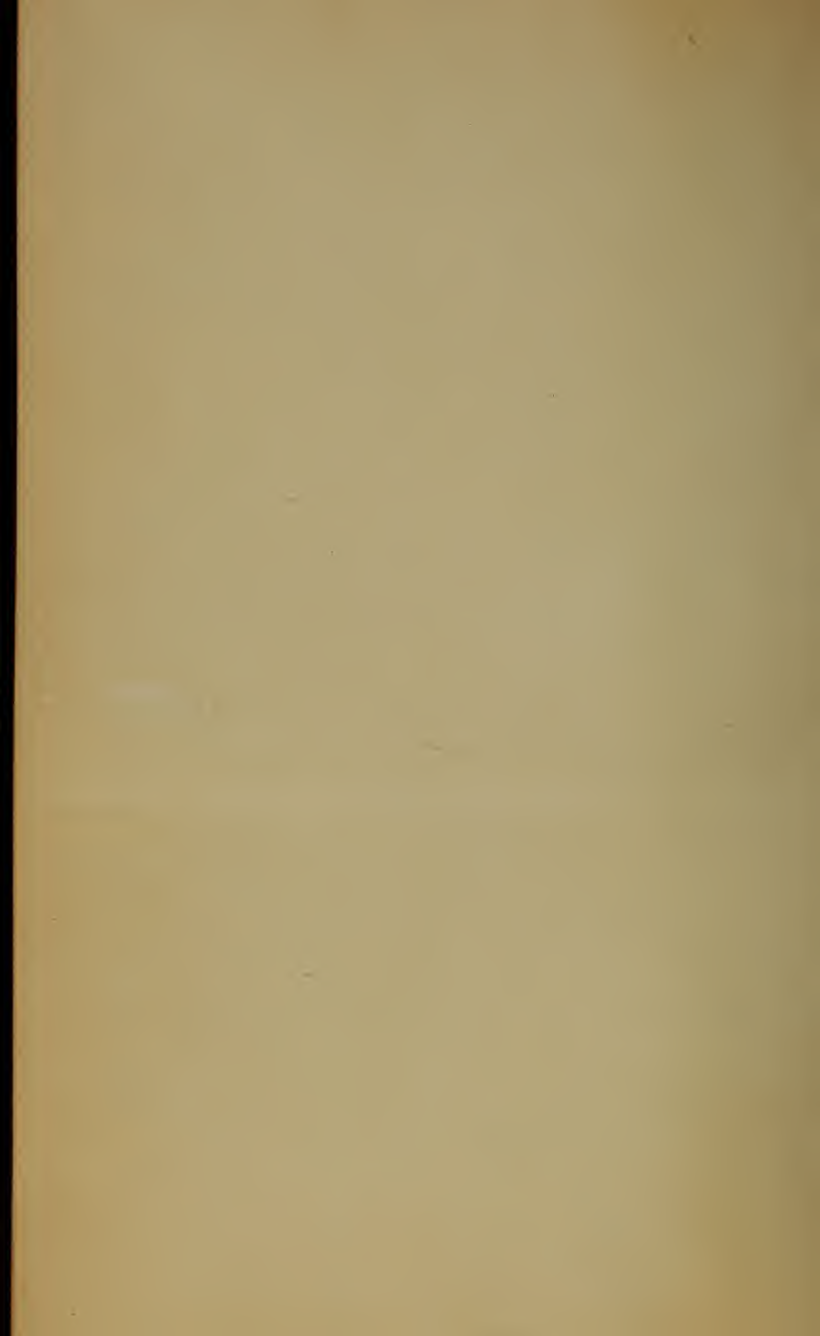
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VINDICATION

OF

BISHOP COLENZO

A VINDICATION
OF
BISHOP COLENSO

(REPRINTED FROM "GOOD WORDS," WITH CORRECTIONS.)

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE ECLIPSE OF FAITH."

Henry Rogers

EDINBURGH:
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK.

1863.

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TO

THE REV. NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D.,

EDITOR OF "GOOD WORDS."

ADVERTISEMENT.

At the request of several friends, I have consented to reprint the following brochure in a separate form.

Conceding the authorship of Bishop Colenso's work, as I suppose we must, I still find it difficult to regard the work itself in any graver light than an ironical jeu d'esprit, though not perhaps a very lively one ; so utterly incompatible does it seem, viewed in any other light, with the antecedents and present position of the author, and so flagrantly, as it appears to me, does it caricature all the principles of a just and comprehensive historic criticism.

A few minor errors of the press, occasioned by the urgency of periodic publication, which prevented me from seeing a revise of the greater portion of the "Letters," have been now corrected. A few explanatory sentences, and here and there a fresh paragraph, have also been added.

2th March 1863.

INTRODUCTION.



THE following "Letters to a Friend" were written on a first perusal of Bishop Colenso's book. Their obvious design is to shew, either that it was not written by the Bishop at all, or, that *if* written by him, was probably written, like the *Amber Witch*, to test the gullibility of scepticism. It may, perhaps, be plausibly said, that to a thorough sceptic, who easily eludes mere testimony,—who will trust to nothing but the evidence of his senses, and not always to that,—there is little in the shape of absolute proof, even *now*, to shew that the first hypothesis may not be true. Few, it may be presumed, have seen the Bishop, or had oral testimony to his authorship; and there are perhaps not a few who would hardly receive oral testimony itself, except they had witnesses to the Bishop's identity. On the other hand, we have frequent proofs that publishers may unsuspectingly give to the world MSS. under the name of authors who never wrote them. Still less is there any proof that, if written by the Bishop, it was written with any serious

design to demolish the historic character of the Pentateuch. At all events, it seems clear that the alternative of the writer of the following "Letters" may be logically argued. If the Pentateuch, which has so long imposed upon the world as history, and imposes on it still, be really not historic, we need not wonder, should it turn out that some one has fathered this *brochure* on an obscure colonial bishop ; on the other hand, if, in *spite* of the proofs of the enormous *a priori* improbability, not to say incredibility, of his being the author, he really *is* the author, people will be apt to imagine that whatever the difficulties which he may point out in the history of the Pentateuch, it may well be history notwithstanding.

LETTER I.

November 3, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I have just risen from a rapid reading of the pages ascribed to Bishop Colenso. I cannot agree with our hopeful young nephew, Tom, that “Moses and his Pentateuch are smashed.” The last two centuries have seen Moses so often demolished, and so often put together again, that I am in no fear about him. I assure you, that if Colenso be the author, I am in much more alarm for the Bishop than for Moses; and fancy that it will be said of him as of another in a like case, “That he went out intending to commit murder, and committed suicide.” Nor am I much afraid for that redoubtable doubter, young Tom. As I have seen Moses so often killed, yet rise to life once more, so I have seen many a young “Thomas Didymus” reclaimed from his doubts long before he had ended his third decade.

But, in fact, I have some doubts about the genuineness of the book. Certainly it contains little matter, if any, which avowed, and therefore consistent, and so far

honest infidels have not insisted on in justification of their infidelity. For aught that appears, there might not be a single argument adducible for the *other* side of the question ; while every objection, nay, every quibble, is diligently sought out, petted, and made the most of. But more of this hereafter.

Meantime, I suggest another alternative. May we not suppose the Bishop to have simulated scepticism, just to see how the shark-like voracity of infidelity would bolt any bait,—even a gobbet of rancid pork,—though the hook were ever so little disguised ; or that he wrote it to see how far the *quasi*-liberalism of our day would go,—that fantastic liberalism which so often contends that a man may swear that he believes what he does *not* believe, and violate oaths and subscriptions with a safe conscience, on the plea that though he *voluntarily* binds himself, he *ought* not to be so bound ! I fancy that either the one or the other of these theories is more probable than that a Bishop of the Church, still *remaining* such, should, in contravention of his ordination vows and in contempt of public decency, write such a book, or at least write it with a serious design. If he *is* serious, so far from “unfeignedly believing all the Canonical Books,” he believes that five of them at least (or rather six,—for the book of Joshua fares no better) are collections of the most prodigious fables, and that

whether fraud or fiction produced them, Christ and his apostles were alike *duped* by them!

You will say, perhaps, as to the *first* supposition,—that of forging Bishop Colenso's name,—“But is it possible that such an impudent imposture could remain undetected even for a moment?” Let me remind you, my friend, that if the Pentateuch has been imposing on all mankind for ages—upon Jews and Christians alike until now—we may well believe that a forger might for a moment cheat the world by a momentary assumption of the name of a bishop of no very great notoriety, and perhaps six thousand miles away. There is, in fact, no comparison whatever in the magnitude of the two impostures, if imposture there be. If the Jews of all ages have been befooled on this point, and that so completely that there has not come down to us a whisper, an echo, a suspicion, of the truth; if they have been thus duped, though the Pentateuch bound upon their shoulders a yoke which “neither they nor their fathers were ever able to bear,” and if *not* true, libels them in such a way as common patriotism would never pardon,—hardly pardon indeed, had the whole been undoubted fact, instead of gross fiction; if their jealous and bitter enemies, the Samaritans, have all been duped in the same way; if Christ and his apostles shared in the universal delusion; if Christians of every name, age, and

nation have been cheated too ; if the great bulk of them, in spite of the innumerable volumes of subtle argument and contemptuous sarcasm which, during the last two centuries, have been written against the historic credibility of the Pentateuch, are cheated still,—can we wonder if this trumpery production of—so I will call him—some pseudo-Colenso, should for a moment be supposed a genuine work ?

However, I do not contend that this is the true theory. It would be sufficient for my purpose, if the book be supposed a piece of pure irony, like Whately's "Historic Doubts." As the good Archbishop was sometimes charged with "universal scepticism" for writing that pamphlet, so we must hope that, with as little reason, Colenso may be for a while charged with deliberately accusing the author of the Pentateuch either with egregious falsehood or fiction, and the Jews, the Christians, and Christ himself, with being his dupes. If, on the other hand, it should be unhappily proved that the Bishop is indeed not only the author, but wrote the book with the *bonâ fide* purpose, or rather the *malâ fide* purpose—considering that he is still a bishop—of destroying the historic credibility of six "canonical books in which he unfeignedly believes ;" if such a paradox should prove to be true, contrary to every appearance of probability, it is not easy to see why the Pentateuch

may not *also* be true in spite of this writer's plausible objections. In either case, we can but reply as the physician did when he was told that, spite of *diagnosis* and *prognosis*, his patient was alive. "Why, then," said the unabashed doctor, "all I can say is that, on the principles of science, he *ought* to have died."—Yours truly,

VINDEK.

LETTER II.

November 5, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I do not know that I can do better than spend an hour or two of this day in stripping our modern Guy Fawkes, who, under an episcopal mask, is seeking to blow Moses and the Pentateuch into the air, of some of his disguises. I assure you the more I consider the matter, the more incredible it seems to me that the Bishop of Natal should have written, at least seriously, the book which bears his name; equally so, whether I look at the thing in a moral or an intellectual point of view. However, I will give a few of the reasons at least, for inclining to the more charitable, if not the more true, hypothesis.

1. Is it credible—as I have already hinted—that a Christian pastor should seriously write a book against

the historical truth of the Pentateuch so exclusively made up of objections, that not even by accident is anything said on the affirmative side? Is it credible that he should stumble *only* on objections—some of them as old as Celsus, many others touched by Bolingbroke and Voltaire, nearly all to be found in one or another of our infidel writers—and urged, I must say, with much the same resolute captiousness and contempt of candour, which characterize the most unscrupulous and disingenuous of those writers? Is it credible, that while he eagerly takes up everything that looks like an objection, and exaggerates it to the utmost, he should also sedulously ignore or extenuate everything that may be said in solution of it? Is it credible, I say, that a bishop, still *remaining* such—clinging in this shipwreck of faith to his mitre, though he has let his “ordination vows” go to the bottom—should write a book containing little but the *matter*, and that expressed so much in the *manner*, of men who have hitherto so written for the very purpose of *vindicating their infidelity*; and who, as long as they deemed such arguments true, would have honestly deemed it infamy either to become or remain bishops in the Christian Church? I say, reasoning *a priori*, it is utterly incredible.

2. Is it credible that a man, educated as Bishop Colenso was—having had a liberal college training, hav-

ing occupied a prominent position at the university, having qualified himself to be a clergyman of the Church of England, having exercised the functions of one, having been appointed a missionary bishop—could have so slenderly considered some of the elementary difficulties of the Book he had gone 6000 miles to teach the heathen, as to surrender his faith ignominiously to the attacks of a Zulu savage? His ignorance, indeed, with such antecedents, would be astounding enough; but he tells us he was *not* altogether ignorant—as how could he be, unless he had purposely shut his ears to all the din of the theological discussions which have been so rife in our age? He tells us that he had, as he imagined, competently acquainted himself with the solutions which had been offered of the difficulties in question, and upon the whole, was satisfied; yet, no sooner does he confront his Zulus, whom he is to instruct in the orthodox faith, than he is straightway instructed *out* of it! His position is really as grotesque as that of the soldier who cried to his comrades, “I’ve got a prisoner.” “Bring him along with you,” said they. “He won’t come,” said the other. “Come without him, then,” they rejoined. “But he won’t let me,” was the answer of this singular captor.

It does not seem, indeed, very likely that a Zulu, who once believed all the gross absurdities of his native superstitions, would be very inordinately startled

by the difficulties of the Pentateuch ; but be that as it may, that Bishop Colenso should be, not only staggered, but completely demolished by the native logic, on such elementary questions as that about the capacity of Noah's ark for its alleged cargo, does seem, to say the least, very improbable.

3. On the supposition that the "ghosts" of some of the difficulties he had formerly felt, and which he once thought "he had laid," had begun to haunt him anew, is it credible that he should satisfy himself that he might close his investigations *in one brief twelvemonth* ; especially considering, that however ignorant he might be when he commenced them, he must have been soon aware, when he received the books for which he wrote, Ewald, Hengstenberg, Kurtz, etc., that the subjects had occupied, and were still occupying, the profoundest and acutest inquirers, in lifelong investigations ? Of course, I do not mean to say there are not men who are such mere bundles of egotism and vanity, as to think they have settled in a trice what the deepest and most sagacious intellects still think disputable. But is this likely to be the case with a man who has the acuteness of mind attributed to Bishop Colenso ? Or is it consistent with the gravity, calmness, and modesty which we should expect in a "spiritual guide ? Above all, is it credible that he should in hot haste publish the crude

results of a hurried examination to the world, at the very moment he himself avows that he was fully aware that his book might and would painfully shock the faith, and trouble the heads, hearts, and consciences of thousands? I find it hard to believe it.

4. Is it conceivable that a Christian Bishop should indulge in such efflorescence of talk as we find in the preface of this work, about the paramount claims of truth and the necessity of following it at all hazards, and yet fail to give the only *convincing* proof that all this was something more than rhetoric—by resigning his bishopric before publishing conclusions so diametrically opposed to the “declaration” in the ordination service: or that the only practical result of all his flaming professions should be a pettifogging attempt to prove that he can, at one and the same time, honourably affirm that he does *not* “unfeignedly believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,” and yet does not violate his declaration in the ordination service, in which he assures us that “he *does* believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments;” in short, that he may keep his doubts,—or rather his *certainly* of the fabulous character of the Pentateuch,—and his bishopric at the same time? Can you believe that a Christian Bishop volunteering such ostentatious professions of his love of truth, and such heroic defiance of the conse-

quences—bent on enlightening the world at whatever cost and peril to himself—should thus ignominiously subject himself to the suspicion of being the mere slave of a shifty and time-serving expediency? Looking at it in a merely intellectual point of view—is it likely a man of so clear a head as stands on Bishop Colenso's shoulders should have so bewildered his brain as to imagine that if he does *not* believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but openly rejects at least *six* of them, he may adhere to the “declaration” that he *does* believe in them; or that any sophistry can prove that, so long as he is a bishop, he is not *bound* by that declaration? Or can we imagine him so far to have muddled himself as to believe that the conclusion to which he had, it seems, all but arrived,—“of the untenableness of his position,”—could be “materially affected by the recent decision in the Court of Arches?”* Even if that decision were ever

* Thus the pseudo-Colenso writes:—“For myself, if I cannot find the means of doing away with my present difficulties, I see not how I can retain my Episcopal office, in the discharge of which I must require from others a solemn declaration, that they ‘unfeignedly believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments;’ which, with the evidence now before me, it is impossible wholly to believe in.”—Page xii. He adds in a note, “This was written before the recent decision of the Court of Arches, by which, of course, the above conclusion is materially affected.”

intended to cover such wholesale rejections of the canonical books as this—which it never was—could he imagine that he was at liberty to say, in virtue of that decision, that he *did* believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, when he *did not*; or that he might say what his own conscience told him he could not, because another man told him he *could*? Is it conceivable that he could still further so muddle himself as to believe that the decision in question could alleviate “scruples on the point of the declaration in the ordination service,” while he still expressly admits that “the answer in the ordination service is *not* the only part of our formularies that will be generally understood, until explained by judicial authority, to involve implicit belief in the historical truth of the facts recorded in the Pentateuch?” (Page xxiv.)

And looking at the question *morally*,—can we believe that a Christian Bishop has so muddled his *conscience*, as well as his intellect, as to believe in the above paradoxes, or the equal paradox that he is at liberty to *remain* in the Church on conditions, as he himself implies, on which no “youth of noble mind, with deep yearnings after truth,” can *enter* it? Can we believe him satisfied with the sophistry, that though such an ingenuous youth, if he did not “believe unfeignedly all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,” could not

make the declaration in the ordination service, yet the Bishop of Natal, having happily *made* it, though he no longer *believes* it, may safely take all the advantages of still *seeming* to believe it? nay, more, not only imply by his position that he still believes it, but give *effect* to that belief by ordaining others on the same terms, and by taking part himself in all the services and formularies of the Church,—solemnly reading “lessons,” in the name of God, ushered in with, “Thus saith the Lord,” though he does not believe that the Lord has said anything of the kind, and rehearsing in the ears of the people, as *sacred* truths, what, upon his theory, can be nothing better than the monstrous exaggerations of Jewish vanity gone mad, or the drivel of superstition in its dotage? Is it conceivable that a bishop of the English Church should so far resemble Pascal’s Jesuit Fathers as to think that he may *continue* to walk in forbidden paths with safety, because he knows “how to direct his intentions aright,” though novices and neophytes, not having the skill to sin without guilt, or walk barefoot on knives without cutting their feet, had better not enter on such questionable paths at all?—Yours truly,

VINDEK.

LETTER III.

November 11, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I asked in my previous letter whether it was credible that one sincerely in search of truth, and, above all, a *Christian Bishop*, should have written a book, in its entire matter, spirit, and tone, so suspiciously like some of the worst books of infidelity ;—in the resolute suppression of *opposing* arguments, in the exclusive appeal to objections, in palpable distortion of facts, in evident reluctance to admit any, even the most reasonable, mitigations of a difficulty—in which last, as much as in anything, the *animus* of a writer may be seen—in the captious pressing of the *literal* meaning, though it makes not only nonsense of Moses, but still greater nonsense of the critic himself ; and I will add,—though I am ashamed to add,—in the attempt, in *some* places, to give a ludicrous and mocking air to what the author represents as the fair interpretation of the narrative. I assure you that, in several passages, the manner reminds me much more of Voltaire, in his virulent articles on the Old Testament in his “Philosophical Dictionary,” than that—I do not say of any Christian Bishop, but—of the more decorous advocates of infidelity.

Now to these charges you will probably say two things : first, that the “Preface” seems to contradict them ; and, secondly, that I ought to justify my representation by some instances. I will endeavour to satisfy you on both points. As to the first : you will say, perhaps, “But is there not a noble devotion to truth expressed in the preface ? Is there not much said about reverence in approaching sacred subjects, a fear of shaking the faith of others, a solemn sense of responsibility ?” etc. etc. There is ; and I answer, it is all confined to the preface. When I examine the book itself, all trace of these fine things has vanished. The professions of devotion to truth in the preface, I admit, lack nothing but the corresponding *practice* ; which, depend upon it, would be found, if it were a bishop who wrote, first in vacating his bishopric before writing, and then writing, if he must write, with “reverence,” and “caution,” and “sense of responsibility,”—of all which I find not in the book one particle.

And these things, I say, make it inconceivable that the book is the *serious*, though I admit it may be the *ironical* work of a genuine bishop. But you will ask, secondly, for some instances of alleged resemblance to the very manner of avowed and consistent infidelity. You shall have them in plenty, and the first shall alone be an instance of all I have charged, if it be not an ex-

ample of the grossest ignorance,—and *that* cannot excuse the tone and manner. It is, in fact, hard to say whether the captiousness of this notable passage, its distortion or omission of facts, its *suppressio veri*, or its *suggestio falsi* be most conspicuous. I allude to the critic's grotesque description of the duties of the priest in the removal of the remains of the slaughtered victims outside the camp. Assuming his calculations of the dimensions of the camp to be about those of London, our critic says (p. 40), "In fact we have to imagine the priest having himself to carry on his back on foot, from St. Paul's to the outskirts of the metropolis, the skin, and flesh, and head, and legs, and inwards, and dung, even the whole bullock." It may be said that his ignorance here of the force of that form of the Hebrew verb, called *Hiphil*, or his never having taken the pains to see *what* the Hebrew was or meant, has betrayed him into this ridiculous representation. But even if we suppose this, can you believe that a genuine bishop of the Church would be either so grossly ignorant or so grossly negligent in a matter of such importance; and allow himself thus unwittingly to play the buffoon, as the author does here, by so grossly burlesquing the meaning of Moses? Had he consulted the original, he could hardly fail to perceive that the form of the verb in question is appropriate to the act, not of *doing*, but of *causing* a thing to

be done. But in reality, even the English as it stands would not fairly suggest anything like the representation of this passage. As long as the usage holds, of enjoining on superiors what is to be done by their agents, or the maxim, *Qui facit per alium facit per se*, it does not follow that the priest was personally to perform these menial duties. Bishop Colenso himself knows far better than to interpret language as our pseudo-Colenso interprets it here. The Bishop uses human speech like any other "reasonable two-legged creature." Thus in his *Ten Weeks in Natal*, he tells us that Dr. Stanger was "one of the two who had brought out of that pestilential river (the Niger) the remnant of the ill-fated crew of the Albert;" and he would justly stare if any one had told him that he supposed "Dr. S. brought them to shore on his back!" Bishop Colenso would have said that he meant that Dr. S. took the means for bringing them out, by assuming the management of the vessel that did it.

But the passage swarms with other assumptions, which show the *animus* of the writer.

The critic knows very well that there was a large body of men—the Levites—whose express duty it was to assist in the service of the Tabernacle, and to perform its menial duties. Even these, however, might not be obliged to take the bullock's remains "on their backs;"

for it is evident that they had carts given them to convey the tabernacle, and, for aught we know, and as may be rationally supposed, other carts for other purposes. If they had carts at all, it is not likely that they would load their “backs” with the bullocks ; but would prefer being “waggoners” to being “porters.” But our critic who, like Shylock, is determined not to have anything but what “is set down in the bond,” may perhaps say—as he is saying perpetually in like cases—“But there is nothing said about *carts*.” Out of his own mouth he may be condemned ; for is there anything said about “backs?”

In short, it is impossible to account for either the ignorance, the levity, or the irreverence displayed in this grotesque parody, without supposing that somebody very different from a bishop penned it.—Yours truly,

VINDEX.

LETTER IV.

November 13, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I do not think a more remarkable instance of resolute captiousness is to be found anywhere than in the treatment of the stale and oft-repeated difficulty as to the rapid increase of the Israelites in Egypt.

“There can be no doubt,” remarks Davison in his Warburtonian Lectures, “that the providence of God in various ways favoured the rapid increase of the people of Israel during the term of their servitude in Egypt;” and we may safely infer that, if there be any truth in the history, they increased at the highest rate at which the natural law permits. At *this* rate or even a little short of it, many acute and learned men have affirmed that Jacob’s family and their wives (perhaps 130 in all) might in the time allowed—whichever of the two limits, 215 or 430 years, be taken—reach the population recorded to have left Egypt at the exodus. Without denying the *possibility* of this, I content myself with asserting the utter absurdity, if we fairly interpret the facts of the patriarchal history, of supposing that the immediate descendants of Jacob, those who came out of Jacob’s “loins,” with, at most, their wives, formed the whole of those who went down with him into Egypt. This critic says such is the story. “I assume, then,” he says, “that it is absolutely undeniable that the narrative of the exodus distinctly involves the statement, that the sixty-six persons ‘out of the loins of Jacob,’ mentioned in Gen. xlv., and *no others*, went down with him into Egypt.” But none of the passages he cites necessarily implies this, unless taken with a senseless literality, *in which he himself does not take it*; and it is obviously absurd,

viewed in relation to the whole history. He quotes again and again the passage, "Thy fathers *went down into Egypt* with three score and ten persons ; and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude," Deut. x. 22. Yet it is expressly said, and this author admits, that their wives *also* went down,* and therefore it is absurd to *press* the language—as he always does however. The above cited passage evidently means that whereas Jacob went down with but a very few descendants, he had now become a great nation. But I contend that all the great facts of the patriarchal history shew that those who went down to Egypt were in all probability not confined to Jacob's blood relations and lineal descendants.

Probably, I might say certainly, the true way of conceiving of the three patriarchs, is to look at them as resembling the chiefs of a tribe of Arab nomads, whose family and household consist of far more than their immediate descendants. God had greatly prospered the

* The *animus* of the writer is curiously shewn in endeavouring to prove that the Israelites would have difficulty in intermarrying with the Egyptian women. It is not likely, he says, that the king, wishing to keep the Israelites depressed and few, would readily allow of such intermarriages ; utterly forgetting, or *choosing* not to remember, that it was only at the close of the sojourn in Egypt, that the Egyptian monarch displayed any jealousy of the Israelites.

patriarchs ; they were a sort of princes in the land. The chief men of the children of Heth said to Abraham, "Thou art a mighty prince among us." We are told that Abraham and Lot parted different ways because the land was too *strait* for them ; which would be strange, indeed, if their families had consisted only of their immediate blood-relations, certainly not a score of persons in all. We are told, that Abraham had 318 male servants capable of bearing arms, and whom he had, by the express command of God, taken into the "covenant" by the rite of circumcision, and thus naturalized as a part of the Hebrew nation. When Jacob returned from his long sojourn with Laban, he who had gone out solitary, had become, as he says, "two *bands*;" he had not only "oxen, asses, and flocks," but "men-servants and women-servants." Other indications, in many places of Scripture, compel us to infer, that the servants of the patriarchs were very numerous, as indeed their great pastoral wealth assures us they *must* have been. Again ; are we to suppose that Simeon and Levi alone destroyed all the inhabitants of Shechem's city by their unaided prowess ? Our critic will say, that the book *mentions* no other agent. Yes, just as we find historians telling us in a thousand places, that a pirate took this or that town, and put the inhabitants to the sword, without mentioning any of *his* agents ; but none but an idiot

would suppose that there *were* none. Again, Jacob, in addition to his own property, succeeded to the patrimony of Isaac, as Isaac had before inherited the wealth of Abraham. We are therefore, I think, *constrained* to believe, that those who went down into Egypt with Jacob, who were to take charge of their numerous flocks and herds in Goshen—and who, as it appears, were to take charge of many of Pharaoh's cattle too—were far more than Jacob's own issue, and probably, instead of amounting only to seventy, amounted to many hundreds. The assignment of a whole province to them (that of Goshen), seems to favour the same idea. For if they had been only seventy, a few moderate-sized farms, one would think, would have been amply sufficient for them.

The answer of Kurtz and others, therefore, who say that those who went down to Egypt must have been very numerous, is most reasonable. I have no hesitation in saying, that if I ever so much believed in the pseudo-Colenso's *general* conclusion as to the unhistoric character of the Pentateuch, I should be obliged to admit that every main *fact* in connection with the patriarchal history points to the reasonableness of Kurtz's conclusion, and that nothing but a determination to make or magnify difficulties, can have blinded this writer to it. In his reply to Kurtz, he observes that

twelve sacks of corn could go but a little way to sustain such a household for a twelvemonth. I reply, first, that it could go but a little way in supporting 70, or rather, including women, 130 ; and secondly, that to suppose it was *intended* to do so, is just one of those conjectures our critic always disallows, when it is used to mitigate an objection, but indulges in *ad libitum* when he wants to magnify one. We have no proof that the patriarchs *had* no more than twelve sacks, or that if they had *not*, they sought more than sufficient for sparing use in Jacob's own household, in the *strict* sense. It is not uncommon, even in these days, for people to live on wheaten bread, though their inferiors and dependants seldom see it. That the famine, up to the time of the departure into Egypt, was of bread, and not of food in general, is proved by the fact, that the herds and cattle remained.

I do not say that we can tell *how* the matter was, nor is it necessary that we should. I merely mean to say, that the pseudo-Colenso's difficulty is entirely of his own making ; and that, meantime, the main facts which bear on the subject, and all the probabilities of the case, are in favour of Kurtz's conclusion.—Yours truly,

VINDEX.

LETTER V.

November 15, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—There is one circumstance, which, if I might trust to internal evidence only, would alone be to me a *demonstration* that this book could not be the work of a Christian at all, much less of a Christian Bishop. Is it conceivable that any honest inquirer, solely anxious to ascertain whether the history of the Pentateuch was true or not, would have confined himself *exclusively to objections*; or imagined that, without computing the *positive* evidence on the other side, it was possible to decide the point? Everybody knows that there is no history in the world that may not be proved *unhistoric*, if only discrepancies, seeming contradictions, difficulties, and objections,—and in every history some will be found that are insurmountable,—be exclusively dwelt upon. There is no history whatever, whether of ancient or of modern times, against which unanswerable topics of this description cannot be urged. In all such cases, the merest tyro knows that the questions involved, depending as they do on *moral* evidence, can be decided only by asking, On which side is the preponderance of argument? Which way does the balance of evidence obviously incline? These are the questions always

asked by common sense and common candour in every such case. Now, the remarkable feature of the present work is, that there might not be, for aught it tells us, one *single thing* to be said for the universal belief of so many nations, during so many ages, in the historical truth of the Pentateuch! Is it conceivable that the obvious and reasonable course mentioned above could have been missed by any fair advocate; by any one who was not *resolved* on proving a foregone conclusion, and supporting it by every species of logical chicanery? In no other way can I account for this purely *ex parte* statement. Is it likely that such *ex parte* statement, and on that side, should have come from a Christian Bishop? How is it, if he be really intent on truth, that he does not even advert to one of the many difficulties which, supposing the Pentateuch *not* historic, are far harder of solution than any of those by which he would prove it fabulous?—yes, far harder than any of the numerical problems he propounds, if we take into account, first, our possible ignorance in many cases of the numbers *originally* in the text; and secondly, do *not* leave out of account the writer's own utterly absurd exaggerations and distortions; if, again, we take into account our ignorance of many circumstances omitted by Moses, and do *not* leave out of account many other circumstances which this writer has most gratuitously

assumed. I repeat, the problems we are called to solve, on the theory of the *unhistoric* character of the Pentateuch, are far more difficult than any of those which, by packing his evidence and begging his premises, this writer urges against it. Let me briefly point out two or three only,—all of which *must* be confronted as a necessary condition of coming to a true decision. How, then, shall we account for the intense, obstinate, and unanimous belief of the Jews for so many ages, and afterwards of their enemies, the Samaritans, in the historic character, nay, in the Mosaic authorship and inspiration of the Pentateuch?—a belief never troubled by a shadow of doubt or suspicion, or contradicted by one echo of opposing testimony ; a belief which, as we shall see by and by, they were ever palpably interested in throwing off, if *erroneous*, and yet which they would sooner die than surrender? This *fact* is in itself equally incomprehensible—if the Pentateuch be indeed unhistoric—at whatever date we fix its composition ; whether we regard the document as preceding or contemporaneous with their national life and institutions, or (as some wise critics, but all of yesterday, pretend) composed very late in their history, or even after the return from the Babylonish captivity. If the former be supposed, and these monstrous fables were from the beginning foisted on the nation as the true history of the events in which it

originated—*Liber, qui veluti curabula Juris continet*—how can we account for its unanimously accepting them, and proceeding to mould the national life, laws, and manners upon them? Above all, how shall we account for this people's affirming, *in this case*, that they had *seen* marvels which everybody was appealed to as having seen, but which they knew had never been wrought; and on that egregious faith—or rather *lie*—proceeding to bend their necks to a burdensome yoke of laws and ceremonies, which, in the language of Peter, “neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear;” and then (to complete the thing) handing down through all coming ages, without one misgiving of heart, one faltering of doubt, one protesting whisper of conscience, this unanimous and stupendous lie? At the very least, how can we imagine the nation moulding its life, forming its institutions and manners, on what that whole nation knew, by the very appeal to it, to be a pure romance?

It is these very difficulties that principally inclined our modern sceptics—who were at all events resolved to get rid of the miraculous elements—to contend for the *late* composition of the Pentateuch. But if *that* theory be adopted, we are soon led to some similar difficulties, and equally insurmountable. For if this book was really a late composition—long after the nation had a history of its own, and had got (no one can tell how) its

institutions and its laws—how came the Jews unanimously to endorse books in which that history is throughout so egregiously caricatured ; in which common facts are everywhere exaggerated into the most monstrous fables ? Five thousand at the Exodus, as this critic supposes, are turned into six hundred thousand, and everything else in similar proportion ; that is, five parts out of about 600 may be supposed true ! Above all, how came the Jews, at that time of day, to vouch for supernatural fictions of the most monstrous character so freely superfused over the whole Mosaic books ? How came they, at so late a period of their annals, to accept without a dissentient voice this document as their true history ? how came they to be universally hoodwinked, so as not to perceive the juggle that was being passed upon them ; or so universally wicked as to join, without a murmur that has ever reached their posterity, in adopting, consecrating, and handing down the cheat ? not one of them even for a moment relenting, in a momentary treason to this conspiracy of wickedness, so far as to express doubt or detestation of this prodigious and unanimous lie ? How could they do it if they would, or how would they do it if they could ?—I say *lie*—for however this writer and many modern infidels may politely endeavour to shew they by no means charge deliberate fraud on the compilers of the Penta-

teuch, it is utterly impossible, if the main facts of the Pentateuch have as little truth in them as this author supposes—and the miracles, *a fortiori*, no truth at all—to free either the writers of these documents, or the nation who accepted and vouched for them, from the most deliberate and enormous falsehood. But, lying or no lying, the thing *itself* is infinitely more incredible than that Englishmen should accept and unanimously hand down to posterity without a trace of disagreement, *Ivanhoe* and *Kenilworth*, as true episodes in our own history, and, what is more, get all after ages to believe them to be so ! This would be a *bagatelle* compared with the supposition of the whole Jewish nation, and even their bitter enemies the Samaritans, receiving, as no less than inspired truth, these impudent contradictions of their true history, and, when first published, of their very *senses* and *consciousness*, to boot ! Again, how came this singular people to receive, not only as historically true, but as worthy of suffering martyrdom for, if called to it, records which, if not history, are but one long *libel* upon themselves ? Would *this* make them more willing to toil in procuring credit for that enduring and unanimous lie, by which alone these records could be effectually consigned to the veneration of posterity ? Would not all patriotism, as well as everything else, lead them to denounce chronicles which are little else than chroni-

cles of their shame? As well may we suppose Englishmen enamoured of the worst libels of the present New York press; adopting them as faithful, nay inspired, portraits of our national character; and handing them down to posterity as worthy of the profoundest veneration! It may be said, perhaps, that the assumed privilege of being “the favourites of heaven,” no matter how they used or abused it, might reconcile the Jews to being thus pilloried to all ages. I answer, first, that it is sadly evident that it was a *privilege*, which throughout their history the Jews were only too willing to forfeit; and, secondly, that though it might tickle national vanity to represent themselves as under God’s immediate guidance, the pleasure would be more than balanced by the necessity of *also* saying that they ever spurned at that guidancy, and repaid the Divine beneficence with the most flagitious ingratitude and wickedness. Such traits—had these records been either fraudulent or fictitious, or anything but truth—it is certain that patriotism would have softened or obliterated, before the nation would have received them. It might, perhaps, humour a man’s vanity to tell how his father and grandfather had been prime ministers to some great monarch; but if he had to say at the same time that the one had embezzled the public property, and the other had been hanged for treason, he would be apt, I fancy, to main-

tain a wise silence about his pedigree. But again: how shall we account upon such an hypothesis as that of this pseudo-Colenso, for the inimitable marks of sincerity, truth, nature, artlessness, honesty, which everywhere abound in the Pentateuch, and which have, in all ages, made not only Jews, but Christians, believe it to be history, and neither fiction nor forgery? How shall we account for those “undesigned coincidences”—many of them as striking as those which Paley has so ingeniously insisted on in his *Horæ Paulinæ*—of which Blunt has given us but a small *spicilegium* in his little work on this subject? How, above all, shall we account for the profound religious tone, the elevated morality, in these documents—which, if not history, are a contexture of the grossest and most impudent inventions? How came the sublime doctrines of monotheism, and a purer and loftier moral code than the world had ever seen, to be given to the world in records, every page of which is stamped, if this theory be true, with the most enormous misrepresentations and the most extravagant violations of truth? How shall we account for the union of so much moral elevation and such unique hypocrisy; such pervading sense of the Divine presence, and protestations of speaking by God’s authority, with such abandoned wickedness? For, I repeat, there is no medium, in the nature of the thing, between supposing the documents

historically true, and allowing that those who palmed them upon the world *as such*, and those who connived at and perpetuated the cheat, were among, not only the most stupendously gifted, but the most deliberately wicked of mankind.

These I say, are a few—and but a few—of the questions of external and internal evidence, which any one, really anxious to institute an inquiry into the historic truth of the pentateuch, would have been certain to ask; he would then carefully compare the result with the objections; that is, he would, like any one else engaged in such inquiries, have given the *positive* as well as *negative* side. He would have done so on the mere supposition that he was impartially investigating history; he could not *but* have done it, had he had any reverence for the Pentateuch as containing, in *any* sense, a revelation from God. I conclude, therefore, that the writer of this book is probably a very different person from its reputed author.—Yours truly,

VINDEK.

LETTER VI.

November 18, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—Pray do not ask me to write more than my object requires. That object is not for-

mally to refute the book, which, as a most grotesque caricature of all the conditions of fair historic investigation, sufficiently refutes itself. My aim is to shew you how much more easy I find it to believe in the historic credibility of the Pentateuch, or even that Moses was its author, than that a Bishop, still *remaining* such, should write a work which speaks of six of his "Canonical Books" much as Bolingbroke spoke of them a century ago, and pleads for much the same system of Deism as that of Tindal ; or that he should borrow, with creeping servility, every contemptible quibble from ancient and modern scepticism against the said "Canonical Books," and forget to borrow a single argument for them ! In shewing this, I do indeed, as I imagine, *also* refute the principal arguments of the book itself, if indeed it be not an insult to logic to apply the term "arguments" to such quibbles as, for the most part, compose it.

And the more I look at the thing, the more incomprehensible the Colensian authorship appears. Take, for example, the account of the "Passover." In order to prove that the events of the Exodus are impossible, the writer represents the narrative as asserting that the command to celebrate the Passover, its celebration, the summons to depart from Egypt, and the actual departure, all took place on the same night ; and then argues that it was utterly impossible that the people could be ap-

prised of these things, organize the movements necessary to carry them out, and actually carry them out, in so brief a space of time,—about twelve hours in all! But how is it that he forgets, or rather mentions only to cut it out of the text altogether, the detailed statement in Ex. xii. 1-11, that Moses had full instructions given to him, and the people through him, nearly a fortnight before? that they were told that on the tenth of the month they were to select a lamb, and “to keep it up” till the fourteenth of the month?—why is the detailed account to go for nothing? Just because the writer says, “there seems some contrariety in the story, from the words used in chap. xii. 12, ‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt *this night*.’ This,” he says, “makes the story perplexing and contradictory;” and so he summarily rejects the fuller and explicit narrative, that he may make it *really* “perplexing and contradictory.” There is, in truth, no contrariety at all; for “*this night*” evidently refers, as any ordinary reader would see, to the night of which the preceding narrative of the coming passover is speaking, not of the night of the passover itself. All the verbs, both before and after, are in the future tense, not the present. And if he will be so senselessly literal as to insist that “*this night*” must be spoken of *absolutely present time*, it can no more mean, as he says, the next *coming* night, than it can

mean a night of next week ; and still less can “this night” of the 12th verse, if spoken of such present time, be used interchangeably (as it is) with “this day” of the 14th verse ; unless our author is pleased—which he often is—to turn light into darkness ! But now, even if there were some slight difficulty in the interpretation of a single particle ; which would be most natural to any honest critic ?—to suppose that there might be some error in his interpretation, or even some error in the *transcription*, of the said particle (and no one pretends that there have been *no* errors in the text), or to take his knife and cut out a whole paragraph of the original document for the very purpose of giving some semblance of plausibility to his objections ? Why should he give exclusive weight to one side, though but a doubtful construction of a single word told for it, and ignore a whole paragraph which, in the most express terms, told against it ? There is but one answer that *I* can give, and that is, that the writer was determined beforehand that the “Exodus” should *not* be historic ; and therefore did as he is continually doing,—chose to reject the stronger evidence, and to take up with any quibble in preference to it : and so he sticks by his—particle ! I confess I am utterly astonished at the effrontery of this criticism, and feel that it is absolutely indecent to suppose that a bishop could act thus for any purpose, but least of all

for the purpose of proving, *per fas et nefas*, or rather *per nefas* only, those canonical books which his vows still bind him unfeignedly to believe, a tissue of incredible fictions! I could as soon believe that one of the right reverend bench had been indicted for “cutting and maiming,” as that he would thus “cut and maim” an ancient document in so shameless a way, and for so shameless a purpose.

We have a similar instance of effrontery—or, if not, of such incredible carelessness, as to make all arguments of such a writer, about the *accuracy* of any document, altogether laughable—in his very *first* quotation; I mean that from which he would fain prove that the sons of Pharez (Hezron and Hamul) are plainly said to have been born in Canaan, whereas, according to our critic, they must have been born in Egypt. Taking his interpretation of the narrative for granted, he infers that the chronology utterly forbids the supposition, inasmuch as, if Judah was only forty-two when he went into Egypt, it is incredible that Pharez should have been old enough to have these sons. Into the difficulty in question, on the theory that Hezron and Hamul *were* born in Canaan, I do not enter. The question is *sub judice*, and awaits, like many other minute difficulties, further investigation. Some say that we do not know sufficient of the chronology to determine Judah’s

age at the epoch in question ; others, that Hezron and Hamul, being considered the substitutes of Judah's dead sons (Er and Onan), though born in Egypt, are given as their *representatives*. Into all this, I say, I do not enter ; a fair critic, really intent on truth, would say, " Let us further investigate the question, but let us not prejudge it." But observe :—

This critic not only assumes, as usual, that *his* view of the question is absolutely certain, and, as usual, *against* the history, but, that this may be made more apparent, he misquotes the passage. As it really stands, the words in question have all the appearance of being a parenthetical clause, intended to supplement the information respecting the family of Judah. So regarded, it by no means follows that the sacred writer intended to incorporate Hezron and Hamul with those who went down into Egypt with Jacob at all ; and this critic, in citing it, or rather mis-citing it, has altered the construction by leaving out a verb, and thus assimilated the expression to that *one* formula, which is applied throughout the chapter to the sons of Jacob and their descendants, who are *expressly said* to have gone with him into Egypt. The language of the authorized version (closely following the Hebrew) is—"And the sons of Levi ; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the sons of Judah ; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and

Zarah : but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul. And the sons of Issachar ; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron. And the sons of Zebulun ; Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel" (Gen. xlii. 11-14). Now you will observe that "the sons of Pharez WERE," is a different formula from that employed in all the other enumerations. Our critic, however, for reasons best known to himself, omits all that could make it appear a *parenthetical* clause, and quotes thus, p. 17—"And the sons of Judah, Er and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah ; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan : and the sons of Pharez, Hezron and Hamul ;" and then says, "It appears to me to be certain that the writer here means to say, that Hezron and Hamul were *born in the land of Canaan ;*" that is, after having himself destroyed all *appearance* of its being possible to mean something different !*

I hesitate to call this a deliberate falsification of the document, but I know not how otherwise to account for

* The hypercriticism of the writer is still farther shewn by his adding, that Hezron and Hamul were clearly designed to be reckoned "among the seventy persons (including Jacob himself and *Joseph and his two sons*) who came into Egypt with Jacob." Yet he knows perfectly well that the historian never disguises the fact, that he did not mean to say that Joseph and his two sons came down with Jacob, or that the two last were born in

it. The writer could not have taken it from the Hebrew, for the verb he has omitted stares him in the face : he could not have copied it from the authorized version ; for not only must there have been the change of the construction and omission of the verb, but a total change of punctuation.

If it be a deliberate falsification, I ask you whether it is credible that Dr. Colenso could be guilty of it ? Is it not much as if one were asked to believe that the Archbishop of Canterbury had been taken up on a charge of petty larceny ? And if the thing be accounted for by supposing such a resolute *animus* against the Pentateuch that the critic could not even see the words before him, and that his obliquity of mind extended even to his vision, is this bitter partiality on *that* side likely to be the fault of a Christian Bishop, who would naturally see as few difficulties as he could in his “canonical books,”—to a belief in which, while a bishop, he still pledges himself ?

Or, to take it on the most charitable ground, and impute it to mere blundering, can you easily suppose that a man of Dr. Colenso’s known accuracy in his *own*

Canaan at all ! Why, with this open declaration on the historian’s part that he is not to be interpreted with this absurd literality, does our critic pretend that it is certain that Hezron and Hamul are designed to be represented as born in Canaan ?

province—that of the mathematics—and writing on so grave and perilous an argument, would thus egregiously blunder in his very *first* quotation from a book, the monstrous blunders of which he is about to prove? Certainly any man may easily prove them, if he first makes them; and this part of the Pentateuch at all events, as it stands in the new version of the pseudo-Colenso, is inaccurate enough!

In my next, I will consider his notable hypothesis of the *current* views of inspiration.—I am, yours ever,

VINDEX.

LETTER VII.

November 21, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I cannot think it at all likely that a bishop, in these days especially, would jumble together in hopeless confusion, as this critic does, the questions of the *inspiration*, and the *historic credibility*, of a book; and still less, that he would strain to the very uttermost the imputed *popular* views on the former subject, for the very purpose of proving that a book is not only not inspired, but is no history at all. This he does by assuming that he may, for the purpose of his argument (but in opposition, as I maintain, to the general belief of the Christians of our day), take for granted

the indisputable integrity of the text, *as we now have it*, its integrity even as regards numerals ; and so bar all possibility of mitigating any of those difficulties which it is his delight to magnify and multiply to the uttermost, by supposing, in some cases, minute errors there.

In so doing he does gross injustice to the argument ; and, no less, to the views of almost every one of us who maintain the historic character of the Pentateuch.

I say I can hardly imagine a Christian Bishop, at least in our day, acting thus for the very purpose of *aggravating* difficulties. I can easily imagine many a Christian Bishop drawing very carefully the line of distinction between the questions of plenary inspiration and historic credibility ; and shewing that, in Tacitus or Gibbon, for example, every part might be true, though not one word was inspired ; that even the admission of *some* amount of error in the author himself, would not destroy or substantially diminish the historic validity of his work ; and that where the errors (for errors of that kind there must always be) originate in the accidents of time and the conditions of transmission, they would not appreciably affect the historic credibility of the work at all. I say I can imagine many a Christian bishop carefully defining his terms and cautiously weighing his propositions on all these subjects, and his care and caution would be well bestowed.

But I can hardly imagine a bishop first ignorantly jumbling all these subjects together, and then exaggerating the popular views of inspiration, for the very purpose, apparently, of inferring that no difficulty whatever can be supposed soluble by referring it to an error in the text ; and that in urging any objection against the historic credibility, he may always rely practically on the indefectibility of the text as we have it.

I repeat, that the critic in all this does gross injustice to the Pentateuch, and not less to the views generally entertained on the subject of its historic credibility by Christians in general—not one in a million of whom would deny that, whatever the *original* inspiration, or infallibility, or historic credibility of the book, there are and must be many minor errors in the text *as we now have it*, and that, therefore, to urge objections, as if there were *no* such errors, against the historic character of the Pentateuch, is to argue most fallaciously.

I say he does injustice to the views entertained by Christians generally, and I say so for this reason : that I do not know the man,—and I confidently challenge him to find one in a million,—who would be prepared to deny either of the two following propositions :—1. That without supernatural aid,—the special miraculous intervention of God,—exerted through all ages on the successive copyists of the Pentateuch, many minute

errors, by the very laws of transmission, *must* have crept in. 2. That there is not the slightest reason to believe (but demonstration to the contrary) that God has wrought these numberless miracles on the heads and fingers of successive transcribers in all ages, to *prevent* such errors from creeping in. I venture to say that I have allowed him a liberal proportion in conjecturing that he might possibly find one in a million who would deny either of these propositions ; and yet, unless a man does so, he admits that not only *may* there be, but there *must* be, many minute errors in the text of the Pentateuch *as we have it*, and, consequently, objections which no more affect its historic credibility than similar errors affect that of any other history. I rather think that not even that solitary witness to the alleged *popular* conceptions of the absolute accuracy of every syllable in the Bible on whose testimony this critic lays such stress, would deny the above propositions ; for it is doubtless not of the Bible *as we have it* that he means that he can assert this absolute accuracy, but as he conceives its text *originally* stood. If any one be prepared to plead for this indefectible text of either Testament *as we have it*, when we know that there are some thousands of various readings in the Old, and as many thousands in the New, I do not know him, and never yet heard of him.

If, therefore, almost every Christian is prepared to

admit that there are, and must be, many minute errors, because *variations*, in the text, but without dreaming that the historic character of the Book (or even its *original* inspiration) is any more thereby affected than the credibility of other histories would be affected by any similar errors, this writer is throughout caricaturing the ordinary view. Christians in general openly contend, that the class of imputed errors which he loves to pet, may be often suspected to be in the text ; that is, errors in the *numerals* : from the ease with which *such* errors find their way into all documents ; and more particularly into Hebrew, owing to the facility with which several letters, from their close resemblance, may be mistaken for one another. And if, in remote times, not only *words* expressed the numerals (as in the present text), but the letters themselves (being numerals) were used for the notation, many errors—without perpetual miracle—would be inevitable. Nor is it of little moment to remark, that in this *class* of errors, though the corruption of the text may be very minute, the difference of meaning may be by no means minute. The substitution of one word for another—of one letter for another—of one accent for another—may make a great difference in a question of numbers. It is true, that the errors in general would be still minute in another sense ; for happily they are rarely of any consequence.

It may at first sight seem to a sciolist that if there be errors—no matter what the cause—the argument for the truth, the historic truth of the Pentateuch, is equally affected. Not at all ; and for these plain reasons :—

1. That one who always reasons on the assumed original accuracy of the text, measures the historic validity of the work by what may be but the error of copyists and printers ; while those who contend for that historic validity, unclogged by such conditions, can consistently assert that, in spite of a certain amount of such error, the historic value of the work is not appreciably diminished at all, far less that every such error can be pleaded against its historic credibility.

2. Everything in the question of the historical value of a work depends on the sources and the limits of its imputed errors ; and the one will also determine the other. If the errors be the result of time and transcription, we know by the whole history of literature that they will exist indeed, but fall within very narrow limits ; and in no serious degree impair our fullest confidence in the integrity and substantial identity of an ancient writing. A great panic was once felt about the direful consequences of admitting thousands of various readings in the Greek Testament, and of attempting a revision of the text founded on more accurate collation ; but it is now seen very clearly by everybody, that all these

readings put together do not, as Griesbach truly says, affect the essential integrity of the text, any more than similar errors affect the text of Plato or Cicero. And the same principles we apply to every other ancient work. But if we *take for granted* that all these errors, still more if they be grave errors, are the result of the ignorance, conceit, exaggeration, or fraud of the original writer, it destroys all confidence in him, even where we cannot *trace* error. Now this critic's eminent want of candour consists in practically arguing as if this admission of inevitable errors, founded on the errors of transcription, and, above all, in relation to the *numerals*, cannot be applied to the investigation of difficulties. He says it cannot be applied to *all* cases, and this everybody will concede; his injustice consists in taking for granted that it can be applied to none; in always assuming that, in the *cases he takes*, he may treat the numbers in the text as those which, without a doubt, originally stood there; and that they therefore imply the original untrustworthiness of the history.

Some cases there are, in which it is impossible not to suspect error in the numbers, arising from the causes above assigned; but they will no more prove the unhistoric character of the Pentateuch in the estimate of any fair reasoner, than similar difficulties will infer the fictitious character of Thucydides or Tacitus. Some of

the difficulties connected with numbers, however, are happily neither errors of transcription nor of the original writer, but simply made by this critic himself—as when he says, for example, that the Pentateuch absolutely declares that all who came *out of* Egypt were exclusively the descendants of the seventy persons who went down with Jacob ; and so in some other instances, which I will point out in a future letter.

This disposition to take for granted the infallibility of his own data—this habitual determination to see *no* doubts in any of his premises, where so many other men have seen them, argues, indeed, the utter want of critical impartiality ; but the *direction* of that *no-doubt*—its ever pointing *one* way, that is, to conclusions against the credibility of the “canonical books,” never by any accident for it—is hardly less than proof positive to me, that the writer, if he seriously means what he says, is no more a genuine Christian Bishop than Tom Paine was.

While the admission of possible minute errors in the text (as in a *numeral*, for example) serves completely to neutralize many of the misrepresentations and exaggerations which our critic founds on the supposition that the text is always *indefectible*, and is a sufficient answer, therefore, to many of his arguments ; of course, neither that nor anything else can avail, if the hundredth part

of the errors he finds, or rather makes, were really the errors of the original writers : the *residuum* of truth that remains becomes infinitesimal. All the supernatural and miraculous narrative must, of course, be at once surrendered ; for though this author is pleased to allow that he finds, in the abstract, no difficulty in receiving miracles, supposing the testimony which vouches for them historically credible,—can anybody suppose the testimony in this case to be worth a button, when it is everywhere represented as affirming, as facts, things about as true as the “ Arabian Nights ? ” Who can trust those who report *miraculous* accounts, when we find them thus travestying the commonest facts of ordinary life ? It is as though we were asked to accept a bill for £10,000 for one whom we could not trust with five farthings ! Certain it is, that if any history of Greece or Rome, France or England, were chargeable with anything like the errors which this critic imputes to the Pentateuch, the whole would fall at once into the region of fable. As to supposing it of any value,—as this critic still pretends,—as a revelation of the highest conceptions of morality and religion, one would as soon think of going to the fables of Pilpay. If we are to go anywhere for them, let us not go to a book which solemnly declares, in every form of adjuration and appeal to Deity, that its facts are true, while nearly all are false. And, indeed,

why should we go *anywhere*? Is not every man, according to this writer, his own oracle? What need can we have of a Bible, or even of his admired "RAM?"—Yours truly,

VINDEK.

LETTER VIII.

November 29, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—The whole force of one large class of "incredibilities" in the Pentateuch which this critic has discovered, depends on the following postulates, every one of which is expressly contradicted in the history. Their futility, indeed, it hardly needed history to prove, since the nature of the case, and all human experience in every analogous case, would be sufficient to explode them. They are these:—

1. That the Levitical legislation was intended to apply in every part, to the life in the wilderness,—which it plainly was *not*. Nay, it is clear that much that possibly *might* have been complied with was, *as a matter of fact*, clearly dispensed with.

2. That even when it was *impossible* to comply with the law, that *impossibility* (which has always hitherto been supposed to operate as a complete release from obligation to any law, human or divine, and by the

maxims of all lawgivers from Solon to Justinian), is still somehow *not* to be supposed to operate as a release, in the case of the unfortunate Israelites.

3. That *all* the Jews, without exception, would obey the law, when it was possible to obey it—though where any one could get such a notion of the Jews from their history it is hard to say; but certainly not from the *Pentateuch* ! Indeed, it would be a little *de trop* to expect it of any people.

Can you now imagine a *Bishop* eagerly burdening his “canonical books” with such gratuitous difficulties as these ? Yet so it is with the pseudo-Colenso ; and a great many of his prime difficulties vanish at once, when we deny these postulates.

As to the *first* : we plainly see that not only was not the rigid observance of every punctilio of the Jewish law imperative in the wilderness, but that one of the most *essential* rites—that which was, in fact, the sign and seal of the covenant (though, for aught we can see, far more easy of observance under such circumstances than many other rites), was neglected altogether. I refer, of course, to the rite of “circumcision,” the practice of which, as we see by the book of Joshua, had been suspended.

It is also generally allowed that the Passover was intermitted ; but, as it was probably from *impossibility*

of keeping it, the matter will be better considered in connection with the second of the above postulates.

The testimony given in Deuteronomy to a general laxity in many parts of the ritual, during the sojourn in the wilderness, confirms this representation, and gives the natural explanation. Let us hear it in full, for the very language is a sufficient answer to many of this writer's sophisms :—" Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety ; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there : thither shall ye bring all that I command you ; your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord. And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and the Levite that is within your gates ; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you"—(Deut. xii. 8-12).

Further, we are expressly told that many enactments

of the law, as we see also by the nature of the thing, were prospective, and could only refer—as they are often plainly said to do—to the life of the people in the settled abodes of Canaan. The formula, too, This or that shall ye “do when ye come into the land,” is of frequent occurrence.

Again : even if there were no such intimations in the history, common-sense would conclude it must be so from the nature of the case ; partly, because the system itself was gradually propounded, and must have required time to inure the people to it,—for no system can be fully administered while it is projecting, just as no house can be inhabited while it is building ; partly, because its very promulgation was an affair of years ; and partly, again, because by the very supposition, the system was given while the nation was in the act of migration—*en route*. Many portions were intended, no doubt, for present though *partial* observance, and so far as circumstances would admit ; but any signal difficulty of conforming to the ritual,—as in the case of circumcision,—seems to have given indemnity for omission, as we might be sure that it would with any *reasonable* law-giver.

But now for the second postulate. Our critic cries : “Many of the laws were in the wilderness *impossible* to be obeyed.” Very well ; that is the easiest case of all :

then they would *not* be obeyed, and nobody would be to blame for it. Necessity not only dispenses with *cere-mony*, or any number of ceremonies, but with the *Decalogue* itself.

No law is more binding than that of “loving our neighbour as ourselves,” and *shewing* it ; but if the good Samaritan has neither the “ ass,” nor the “ wine and oil,” nor the “ twopence,” the will is at once taken for the deed. Much more in the matter of mere ritual. May we not suppose as much in the case of the law of Moses ? or rather of Him who loves “ mercy ” more than “ sacrifice ? ”

What can be plainer than that, if, as our critic justly argues, it would be *impossible* to comply with many of the laws in the wilderness,—though intended for observance in future time, and in the permanent abodes of Canaan,—such impossibility was, *per se*, a sufficient excuse for not observing them ? All this we should reasonably expect from any legislator in his senses. And this granted, away fly many of the stupendous yet utterly absurd difficulties which our pseudo-Colenso has conjured up ; unless, indeed, the reader choose to suppose Moses, or rather God, harder and more inexorable than the Egyptian taskmasters themselves.

How, he asks, how, in the name of wonder, could the Israelites in the desert procure the 264 pigeons *per*

diem, or 90,000 annually? or, if they *were* offered, how could *three* priests (here, by the way, he assumes there were *but* three, of which more anon) eat them? Why, as he insists with arithmetical accuracy, it is 88 per day! Well, if the pigeons were not to be had, it is certain that the people could not offer them, and would have abundant reason for *not* offering them; and there is an end of *that* difficulty: and as three priests, sure enough, could not eat them, so they would happily *not* have them to eat; and that rids us of another difficulty. Or does this writer really mean to say, that the Jewish legislator was so much worse than Draco, as to punish disobedience when it was impossible to obey? or worse than the tyrant from whom Israel had just escaped,—who, at all events, did not demand bricks without *clay*, though he did “without straw.” Would Moses, or He whom Moses represented, demand that pigeons were to be offered whether pigeons were to be had or not? HE, who expressly says that his equitable principle is to exact obedience only where it is possible to pay it; and who has told us, that “a man is accepted according to what he hath”—pigeons or what not—“and not according to what he hath not?”

When the mayor of a French town apologized to Henry IV. for not firing a salute in his honour, by saying that “he had no artillery,” it was at once accepted

as a release from all obligation in the matter ; and though the mayor, who seems to have been as stolid as our critic, is said to have wished to give nineteen other good reasons for the omission, his majesty was pleased to be content with this one. According to our pseudo-Colenso, God is not half so reasonable as Henry IV. If the critic had been Henry IV. he would doubtless have demanded the salute though there was no artillery ; or at least the remaining nineteen reasons for the omission !

Similar observations apply to the assumptions (they are nothing more) that the Israelites must, according to the story, have had, *throughout* their sojourn in the desert, prodigious herds of cattle to supply the imagined continual demands of sacrifice. If they had, he argues, how could such multitudes of cattle be fed ? and if they had not, how could they complete the toll of victims ? Who, but a man determined to make out a case, could fail to see that the one difficulty answers the other ? If they had not cattle for all the sacrifices, all the sacrifices were not offered ; if they had all the cattle, then all the cattle must have been somehow fed. In the former case, as before, the involuntary omission would, from the nature of things, meet with the usual indulgence.

I think it highly probable that the Israelites had but

little cattle after the first year, till after the conquest of Midian ; that is, till they approached the end of their pilgrimage. Everything shews, that between the pass-over in the second year in the wilderness of Sinai, and that on the cessation of the manna, that is, during thirty-eight years of their wanderings, the passover was intermitted, and perhaps many other rites involving sacrifice ; on which a few words presently. Certainly, few allusions to cattle are to be found after the first year or so, till the closing years of the pilgrimage in the desert. It appears they had much cattle when they set out ; they had much towards the end of their desert sojourn when they had “spoiled the Midianites ;” and they had doubtless *some* cattle during the whole period, but there is no proof that they had many. Now, it is curious that during the interval in question, and after the manna began to fall, little mention is made of cattle ; which could hardly have failed to be otherwise had the narrative meant to say that they existed in any considerable numbers, so as to be the prodigious encumbrance our critic’s interpretation supposes. Possibly, as the pass-over demands in Egypt would seriously diminish the reproductive power of the flocks (as this very critic suggests *must* have been the case), so the only recorded pass-over in the wilderness (that at Sinai) may have very opportunely—not to say designedly—operated in the

same direction, and made the *stock* in something like proportion to the scanty pasturage.

As to the intermission of the passover, that is generally admitted ; and both that, and the probable suspension of many of the sacrifices, may be argued from a number of “undesigned coincidences” in the Pentateuch, which I commend to the diligent attention of some future editor of Blunt’s admirable little work. Everything would seem to point to this conclusion. For example, if they had but scanty flocks, we need not *wonder* that no observance of the passover is mentioned ; the passover would drop from *necessity*, and no one could be blamed for it, on the principle already laid down. Another like cause would seem to *necessitate* the intermission ; they were commanded to keep the passover with *unleavened bread* ; now, as long as the manna fell, they had no bread. In curious harmony with all this, there is, as I have said, no allusion to a passover during the fall of manna ; and when we next hear of it, it is in connection with the cessation of manna and the resumption of corn bread (Joshua v. 10-12). At the same period, the avowedly intermitted rite of *circumcision* was resumed. The previous neglect of that would seem to intimate the contemporaneous suspension of the passover, because, by *express law*, only the males who were circumcised were permitted to partake of it. This last rite was

expressly laid down to be an essential preliminary to a participation in the other. Again, the intense longing for "*flesh*," as a new variety of diet, after the people began to "loath the manna," would also seem to indicate that they had then no large herds of cattle with them. "But now our soul is dried away," said the people; "there is *nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes*," Numb. xi. 6. These and other allusions, all of them casual, picked up here and there, dropped "undesignedly" in the midst of other matter—but of course all the more striking on that account—favour the two-fold conclusion, that during the period in question, the cattle of the Israelites were few, and that the passover, and probably many of the rites involving sacrifice, were omitted. By the way, if scanty flocks and no corn necessitated the omission of the passover, must they not have diminished many other offerings? How many imperatively required meal and wine and oil! And I apprehend too, the "shew-bread" was not made of manna.

It would not, perhaps, be very extravagant to suspect that the suspension of many of the rites was not only necessitated by the privations of the strictly penal sojourn in the desert—an abnormal condition, into which their rebellion alone plunged the people—but was designed also as a part of the punishment of that

contumacious generation, whose “carcases fell in the wilderness.” It may well be surmised, at any rate, that it was not among *them* that the Mosaic dispensation was to be administered in all its completeness and splendour.

But be this as it may, everything in the history—express declarations, obvious facts, necessary inferences, oblique allusions—all shew that the Levitical dispensation not only never was carried into effect, but was not even intended to be carried into effect more than partially, in the desert. Yet the contrary is the theory of our critic, and his very chiefest objections vanish with it.

I have mentioned above, his assumption that there were but *three* priests. It is an assumption, and nothing more. It does not follow because no others are mentioned, that there were none. It is only by accident that the son of Eleazar is mentioned ; but Ithamar may have had sons too, and Eleazar more than one. At any rate, the grandsons of Aaron would be quite old enough to have sons of an age to enter upon the priest's office long before the close of the forty years. Certainly there were more than three when the people passed over Jordan and approached Jericho, for we find then there were seven—and the language suggests that there might be more than seven—who were employed to “blow the

trumpets" at the siege of that city. It is precarious to conjecture merely from the silence of a writer.

But even if the priests, technically so called, were at first limited to *three* (though we are certain, from the fact just mentioned, that at the later period there were more), the difficulty is entirely an arbitrary one, and may be effectually met by the very considerations by which this critic manages to answer, unwittingly, his own objections. If, as he so unanswerably proves, there was no pasture for more than a few sheep and oxen in the wilderness, the priests' principal functions nearly ceased of necessity, just as *circumcision* did, without any one being blamable or being blamed for it ; so that the three priests may really, for aught we know, have had a rather easy time of it, instead of being overwhelmed with the superhuman toil which our critic loads them with. On the other hand, even if there were a million of cattle and ten millions of pigeons, and only three priests at one time, then, on the same principle as before, namely, that God expects nobody to perform impossibilities, the said priests would no more be called to eat, each, *eighty* pigeons *per diem* in this case, than the people to *provide* them if they were not to be had. The sacrificial services, like the rite of *circumcision itself*, would be in that case suspended.

And, lastly, *if* the services that were not remitted

were beyond the power of the three priests to perform, we may be certain that, as in all like cases—I do not say of *Divine*, but of merely human administration—extra-official help would supply a deficiency of the proper functionaries ; and as in the Chronicles we find that the Levites, for that very reason, on certain occasions helped the priests, by assuming a part of their peculiar functions, so it may well have been the case at an earlier period. The critic says, indeed, that we do not *read* of any such arrangement *at that time* ; and with other solutions of the difficulty, we do not need it. I would only remark, on this point, that when an author is *silent*, we need not fill up the gaps (if we must or *will* conjecture), by supposing something which makes him an idiot, and is foreign to all the analogies in the administration of all laws, human and divine ; least of all in interpreting a system purporting to be enjoined by Him who expressly avows that he loves “mercy better than sacrifice,” and prefers the “spirit” to the “letter.”—But, in truth, we do not need the solution. With the Levites to perform all the menial duties of the tabernacle ; with its other duties limited by the necessary circumstances of the life in the wilderness, as plainly indicated in the narrative ; and, lastly, *waiting* proof that the priests were only three—I am not alarmed by our critic’s statement of the prodigious labours of these overtasked functionaries, and

am quite *certain* that, if, as he suggests, it was *impossible* for the people to get the 90,000 "turtle-doves or young pigeons" *per annum*, they were not obliged to offer them.

Lastly, as another postulate—a necessary condition of the full complement of his difficulties—our critic implies that all the exactions of the law, however various and troublesome, would, when possible, be sure to be most conscientiously paid by the Israelites; rather a modest demand on behalf of that very generation who were, at that moment, suffering the capital penalty of uttermost ingratitude and rebellion! We shall next have him supposing that the laws of England, even to the very least minutiae, are all conscientiously observed by our "tickets-of-leave." If he asks (as on one or two occasions he does), whether we can suppose the Israelites would refuse to obey the voice of God himself, I must answer, first, that the history teaches us that they *did*; and secondly (as Warburton said to Bolingbroke, when he urged a like objection), that we need not wonder at it; since all men in all ages have been doing the very same, and that, too, in the case of laws which they not only *confess* to be Divine, but infinitely more momentous than any laws of ritual can be.

And now, is it easy to suppose that a genuine Bishop would feel such spite against his own "canonical books,"

as to insist on these perfectly gratuitous postulates for the very purpose of making those books appear incredible ; and, above all, blindly insist on difficulties, even when they actually destroy and neutralize one another ? So few pigeons, if any, to be got, and yet the priests having to eat so many ! However, it is well when an objector is inconsistent enough to take this course. He is like the poor woman at “ Crocodilople,” in Southey’s ballad, who killed the young “ Prince Crocodiles,” by thrusting

“ The head of one into the throat of another,
And made each Prince Crocodile choke his brother.”

Yours truly,

VINDEX.

LETTER IX.

December 4, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—How shall I characterize the unexampled absurdity of this writer in pressing popular language to death, for the purpose of making difficulties where no mortal else would feel any ? Can you imagine that, for this object, a Bishop of the Church would insist on interpreting the Bible, as we may be certain neither he nor any one else would interpret any other book ? Instances of his more than Voltairian

intrepidity, in inventing objections in this way, you have in his Chapters iv. and v. For the former : in Lev. viii. 1-4, on the consecration of Aaron, it is thus written :—“And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, gather thou all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses did as Jehovah commanded him. And the assembly was gathered unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” The congregation, then, assembled at the door of the tabernacle ; and our critic wants to know if we are really to suppose that the whole 600,000 grown-up men were there? He *does* seem to think, indeed, that the whole 2,400,000 might (if he were not somewhat indulgent) be fairly demanded by the expression ; and, indeed, on his principle of *literal accuracy*, I do not think he ought to let Moses off with less than meaning to include every sucking-child among them ! However, to take the assembly at *only* 600,000 and odd “adults in the prime of life ;”—in accordance with the third most modest postulate of which I have already spoken, he is bent on “supposing that all the congregation of adult males had given due heed to the Divine summons, and had hastened to take their stand, side by side, as closely as possible, in front, not only of the *door*, but of the whole *end* of the tabernacle in which the door was.” Generous concession again of more space than might be granted !

And, first of all, he proves that, if they were at the door of the tabernacle, that must mean that they were *within* the court ; and as this court, by his own precise measurement, could not be more than 1692 square yards, he asks, and surely with reason, how could 600,000 men stand within it? He might have dispensed with all this, if he had but chosen to remember that not one of the 600,000, except the Priests and Levites, were permitted to enter it at all, on pain of death. To be sure, it would *still* be on pain of death, if the whole 600,000 were crammed into it, for the “Black Hole” of Calcutta would be infinite space to it. I say he has *chosen* to forget the above restriction ; for, in another mood, he seems to remember it too well (p. 123), and to make the prohibition extend, not only to the people in general, but *also* to the Levites ; that is, he lets into the court those who were forbidden to go, and shuts out those who were *not* forbidden ; but, of course, for the purpose of proving the Pentateuch fabulous, all is lawful ! Well, supposing the court “tabooed” (*I* will also suppose the curtains, which surrounded it, raised for the sake of enabling the folks to see the ceremony), our author then proves that if the crowd stood abreast, not only the width of the *door* of the tabernacle, but even the width of the whole *end* of it, they would extend

twenty miles ; and if the whole width of the *court*, no less than four miles ! He then innocently wants to know whether all could have heard Moses' words, or been intelligent spectators of the ceremony ? Why, no ; the farthest ranks, I think you will grant, could not even have seen Moses, unless they had good telescopes, of which, as our critic might say, the Pentateuch says nothing. But was ever anything more absurd ? When a community is invited to become spectators of a public transaction, and it passes in the name of the community in virtue of those who are there, is any one so ridiculous as to suppose that every soul that was invited, or that even *might* have attended, *has* attended ?

When it is said that the county of Kent met on Penenden Heath, does any one argue that it is false, for not a hundredth-part of the population was there ? And so in a thousand cases.—Multitudes would as usual be absent from really good and sufficient reasons, and multitudes of people more, because indolence and other causes told them there were good and sufficient reasons ; many more, doubtless, because they did not choose to go. Our author, to be sure, takes it for granted that the Israelites were so unlike all other people, or rather, so unlike *themselves*, that there was not a soul of the 600,000 who would neglect so plain a summons of duty ;

as if all mankind do not often neglect what they themselves own to be the unequivocal voice of God speaking within them !

Not only would the business be transacted, as usual, by those who were present, and who were representatives of the rest, but, for aught we know, the "elders" and "captains of hundreds and thousands" might be the commissioned representatives of the rest, and the language would still be perfectly in accordance with common speech.

But how does our author triumph (chap. v.) when Moses and Joshua are said to have addressed *all* the congregation—the *whole* congregation ! What can "*all*" and "*whole*" mean less than all the men, women, and children—sucking babes into the bargain ?

Now, as he truly says, even the cries of the babies in arms in an assembly "as large as the population of London," would have drowned the voice of any speaker. I should think so. The only absurdity in the thing is, that any one should be absurd enough to suppose the author of the Pentateuch, (who was at least no fool), to mean any such absurdities.

"All the world knows that;" "All the world is gone after him;" "Peter the Hermit precipitated all Europe on Asia," says one historian; "All London flocked forth in a paroxysm of returning loyalty," says

another; "All Paris was crowded into the Champs de Mars," says a third. No sooner is anything of the sort said, than a critic of the pseudo-Colenso type asks whether it can possibly be true, that all the lying-in women and new-born babes were included? because, if not, the statement is not historic. Whether we can even suppose all the hospitals and prisons emptied on the occasion? Whether it can be seriously meant that all the houses were absolutely deserted, and not a kitchen-fire smoking, or a joint of mutton cooking, on that memorable day? It is a pity our author did not consult a concordance to see how many more absurdities he might have made out of this popular use of "all," and the like words, in the course of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua. Thus we are told, that "all Israel stoned Achan." It would have been interesting to learn from our mathematical pedant, how many cubic feet of rough masonry were thus piled about poor Achan by the entire 2,400,000; he might get his average somewhere between the pebble (thrown, of course, by proxy) contributed by the new-born infant, and the "lump of a two-year-old" (as Miss Edgeworth's Irish witness would say), hurled by the stalwart arm of one of "the mighty men of valour!" Very superfluous was it for the historian to add, "And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day." If they did so, after pitching

2,400,000 stones into him, at him, and on him, it was certainly a work of supererogation.

But to return to Joshua's instructions to the *whole* congregation. Not only would most persons suppose the conditions of the narrative satisfied, if "the heads of tribes," "the elders of the people," "captains of hundreds, and captains of thousands," if, in short, a large assembly, represented the nation, and communicated the words of Joshua by the regular means organized for that purpose ; not only so, I say, but the reader may see, that we have in other passages an easy key to the true and natural interpretation of the terms thus strangely tortured and wrested. Thus we are told, Ex. xix. 3-8 : "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel ; ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ; for all the earth is mine. . . . These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came, and *called for the elders of the people*, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered

together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord."

"The journey to London," says Macaulay, speaking of the restoration of Charles II., "was a continued triumph. The *whole road from Rochester* was bordered by *booths and tents*, and looked like an interminable fair. *Everywhere* flags were flying, bells and music sounding, wine and ale *flowing in rivers* to the health of him whose return was the return of peace, of law, and of freedom." What havoc would such a critic as the pseudo-Colenso make of such language! "*Thirty miles* of booths!" he would say; "Wine and ale flowing in rivers! Who can believe it?"

It is a great comfort that the critic has *at present* left the sublime poetry of the Hebrews (with one slight exception, in the case of a single image, which I may notice in another letter) untouched; he has not brought his tailor's measure, with its tenths of inches marked off, to see whether their great bards habited their thoughts in a sufficiently precise and close-fitting dress. "The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them," says the Pentateuch, in the briefest and sublimest image which can express the uttermost effect of panic terror. Such a critic as this would say that he really could not credit it; for if

it were true, a moderate-sized oak, felicitously posited on a gusty autumn day, would rout the largest army ever brought into the field !

In truth, the mode of interpreting ordinary human language indulged in by this critic, would, if it were at all common, deserve to be considered a sort of disease : it should be called “*Delirium Arithmeticum*” or “*Mania Pernumerans*.” If men were commonly pestered with it, it would be misery to open one’s mouth. To interpret speech, with no power of taking the meaning from popular usage,—from the context,—from conditions founded on the supposition that we have imaginations as well as the noble faculty of counting our fingers, bespeaks a man devoid of common sense. If language were used as this critic would seem to require Moses to use it, not only would all natural freedom of style be destroyed ; not only would it necessitate a most strained, and, after all, vain attempt at absolute and literal precision, compared with which an Act of Parliament would be eloquence ; not only would it destroy all trope and metaphor, and the beauties of figurative language generally ; but to talk at all would be an intolerable nuisance. Hardly a phrase could come out of our mouths, of which we should not be expected to give an exact limitation, in order to satisfy some soulless and brainless Aristarch, and prevent his concluding that we were as great idiots as himself.

In short, there is no end of the absurdities which may be fastened on anything spoken by man in the ordinary language of men, if the “delirium arithmeticum” but once take possession of the critic. He will be as much at a loss as Peter Simple, who, when the coachman touched his hat and said, “Please remember the coachman, sir,” replied, “*Remember you!* Certainly I will try, if it will give you any pleasure.” “The lad’s a fool,” very naturally muttered the coachman. Some suppose that the extreme form of this bondage to the “letter” is now and then an effect of too exclusive devotion to the mathematics. If so, it is the hardest thing one can say of the mathematics. But if it were a genuine effect of the study (which I do not believe), I should be disposed to alter the old proverb, and, instead of saying “There is no fool like an old fool,” say, “There is no fool like a mathematical fool.”—Believe me, yours truly,

VINDEK.

LETTER X.

December 8, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I see that many of the periodicals have noticed the book ascribed to Bishop Colenso; but I cannot say that the way in which they do it at all

convinces me that *he* wrote it, or any Christian at all. You will observe that all of them, that have the slightest proclivity to scepticism, are shouting, "Io Triumphe!" and the more loudly, the stronger those proclivities are. On the other hand, all that reverence the Bible are full of indignation that a Christian Bishop should have written such a book. If they were as charitable as I am, they would have considered those very phenomena an indication that it was not written by a Christian Bishop. When did a Conservative candidate catch none but the Radical votes?

But I proceed with my own reasons for doubting; and among the strongest is the singular disingenuousness (I really should be sorry to suppose any *ordinary* sceptic, much less a Christian Bishop, guilty of it) in the account of the Exodus itself. The wildest license, both of *suppression* and *invention* of facts, is there indulged in, in order to give an impression of the utter impossibility of that event. Our critic not only affirms that the "passover" is represented as originally instituted, the lamb got, cooked, and eaten on the very night of the Exodus itself, but that in that same night the people (2,400,000) called in all their flocks and herds (2,000,000) from the whole country, mustered at Rameses, and journeyed the next morning over the arid and stony track to Succoth; and that the story even requires that

we believe that "infants and young children" performed this same feat—"twenty miles a day on foot!" (page 47).

Now, on the hardihood with which he has expunged from the text the full directions for the passover, given nearly a fortnight before, in order that he may more deeply colour this fiction of midnight confusion, I have already commented. But even passing by that, his account is as complete a fancy-piece as ever a novelist indulged in. Supposing any truth in the history at all, is it possible to imagine that the Israelites knew nothing of their coming deliverance till the night of the Exodus itself? Must they not have been living in instant expectation of it for weeks? Does not the third chapter of Exodus expressly commission Moses to tell the people that the day of liberation drew nigh? Does not the sixth chapter renew that commission? Could they witness in stupid indifference successive judgments, ever increasing in severity, which were not only to make the Egyptians *willing to let* them go, but eager to *thrust them out altogether*? If these plagues really took place according to the history, were they without significance, so that when the last plague fell, the people were all comfortably asleep, and roused as suddenly and in as stark ignorance of what was going on as the Bishop of Natal (such is the judicious parallel of this critic) on a midnight rumour of an utterly unexpected raid of Zulus?

Our critic may say, perhaps, that he does not believe Exodus iii. ; does not believe Exodus vi. ; does not believe that ever the plagues occurred ; hardly believes a word of the history ; and, I have no doubt, he would speak most truly. Very well ; let him say so then : but let him not argue that a narrative, as it stands, is inconsistent and incredible, by just taking his pen and scoring out statements that *make* it consistent, and then filling up the gaps *ad libitum* with any whimsies of his own, which shall make it seem otherwise. Yet this is just what is done in the present case. His description is all a bubble blown out of the simple words, “ And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot, that were men, besides children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them ; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle.” While our critic has invented all imaginable details, which may in any way tend to render the story incredible, the simple narrative itself tells us next to nothing, except the fact ; and this is supplemented as he pleases. With characteristic effrontery, he rebukes Kurtz for supposing that there may have been pauses between Rameses and Succoth. Has our critic any more right to say there were *none* ? The simple truth is, that the history leaves us wholly to conjecture in this matter ; and our critic has certainly abused this privilege to the

utmost. But then, that these purely gratuitous conjectures should always tell *against* the veracity of the Pentateuch, never in what may explain or diminish a difficulty, is what I cannot reconcile with the character of the reputed author. The fact is, that, for aught we know, the Israelites may have been several days about their journey to Succoth ; we do not know that they *all* mustered, men and cattle, at Rameses, or in what lines of direction, or in what proportions, or at what intervals between different detachments, they fell into the march ; still less that all was compressed into one day's work. One thing at all events is certain—*our critic proves too much*. If his objections, on the score of confusion, inconvenience, and distress, the presence of the “sick, aged, infirm,” and so on, are to be taken for a demonstration that the thing could not be, it is certain that many an event of authentic history—the extensive deportation of ancient nations under the great oriental monarchies, Scythian and Mongolian migrations, the migration of the Helvetii, so particularly described by Cæsar—may also be pronounced impossible. It is not to be forgotten, indeed, that if there be any truth in the narrative at all, the Israelites were under miraculous guidance and protection ; a fact which our critic always forgets, or more properly speaking, would, I daresay, deny ; but even apart from that, it is little except his own fancy which

makes the Exodus more difficult than many of the great migrations of history just referred to ; for all of them must have been cumbered with sick, lying-in women, and sucking babies, more than enough. That it was, doubtless, attended with many incidental straits and hardships, we may well believe. Does the Bible say it was without them ? Does not the narrative imply it ? Did not the people, under the pressure of hunger and thirst, often look back with ungrateful regrets to the bondage they had left ? Were they not willing to barter their liberty and all its privileges, if they could but have got back to the leeks and garlic and full flesh-pots of Egypt ?

Our author asks, what did they do with the sick, lying-in women, and children ?

It is sufficient for us to say, we do not know ; we only know, *first*, that the story has not a syllable about their travelling twenty miles on foot, as he foolishly says it *requires* us to believe ; *secondly*, that whatever the means of transport used for such as required it, the difficulty would be no more insuperable than similar obstacles in the way of other migrations ; and, *thirdly*, that no migrating nation, probably, had half the facilities for such a movement, if there be any truth in the history at all—such a *vis à tergo*—as the Israelites had on that occasion. After such a series of plagues, and such a

crushing calamity to conclude them, the Egyptians would be willing to give not only "jewels and ornaments," but anything on earth, to get rid of such guests; and probably never had so welcome a sight as their backs. Horses, mules, waggons—the whole power of the kingdom at such a moment would have been at the disposal of the exiles, if necessary. I pretend not to say *how* the details of the Exodus were managed; for the history is silent. I only say that, taking the relations between the two nations to be what the narrative represents them, such a mode of supplementing the silence of the narrative as that just suggested, is infinitely more probable than our critic's whimsical inventions, of the people all being roused at a moment's notice, and lying-in women and children going twenty miles on foot! The former supposition goes on what not only were *likely* to be, but *must* have been the feelings of the Egyptians. The Israelites could not be in so much haste to go, as the Egyptians, eager that they should be gone; "For we be all dead men," said they. By the way, I wonder our critic did not take *that* literally, and prove that the history says that the Egyptians spoke after they were all dead! But I must notice one example of the kind in this connection. It is the instance referred to it in the preceding letter.

"Having done all this," he says, speaking of the

prodigious toils he has crowded into the passover night, “they were started again from Rameses that very same day, and marched on to Succoth, not leaving a single sick or infirm person, a single woman in childbirth, or even a ‘single hoof’ behind them” (page 62). Thus, as usual, he takes an eloquent metonymy, in which Moses expresses the demands of Jehovah to Pharaoh, “Our cattle also shall go with us : *There shall not a hoof be left behind,*” in strict literality ; and would doubtless think the whole history invalidated, if he could but find that a single Israelitish cow had gone astray !

In short, I think our pseudo-Colenso’s “new version” of the incidents of the Exodus, one of the most remarkable efforts of disingenuous perversion of a narrative I ever read. I cannot think that a Bishop of the Church—whose whole tendencies and bias *must* be, if only in respect for his position and ordination vows, in favour of retaining as *much* of the narrative as possible—would thus go out of his way, and with evident *em-pressement*, not only to interpret, but supplement, the history uniformly in the sense least favourable to his sacred books.—Believe me, yours truly,

VINDEX.

LETTER XI.

December 15, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I know not how to ascribe to Bishop Colenso, or to any other Christian man, or indeed to any *candid* opponent of revelation, the perfectly arbitrary and self-sufficient way in which this writer sets aside every consideration which can bar the road to his grotesque conclusion, that every Hebrew mother, if the history be true, “must have had, on the average, forty-two sons!” I count it absolutely certain that nothing but a previously strong bias in favour of a foregone conclusion could have induced him thus summarily to set aside all such considerations.

Still less can I believe that any one, or at least a man with anything like a mathematical reputation, (and Bishop Colenso is a mathematician, if he be nothing else), would have fallen into such a blunder, even in the application of his own hypothesis. For, on the very same principles, we may prove that every *English* mother (and we have had no Pharaoh to massacre any male children among us, and therefore to diminish our full tale of living “first-born,” if they are to represent the number of mothers) must have at least from twenty to thirty children !

But I will first briefly mention the by no means unreasonable mitigations of the difficulty about the "First-born," which not only orthodox interpreters, (whose solutions this complaisant critic is so fond of contemptuously stigmatizing as utterly futile and untruthful), but modest Rationalists, have suggested as probable. One obvious thing is, that it is *possible*, on the principles laid down in a previous letter, that we may not be in possession of the true number originally in the text, and that some such error may lie at the bottom of the difficulty. This is, of course, not for a moment to be thought of; for whenever a *difficulty* is to be urged, no one can exceed our author in his solicitude to retain the text.

Again: Michaelis, who is not very conspicuous for his orthodox proclivities, suggests that the "first-born" of the *father*, and not of the mother *only*, is intended; and that, therefore, if polygamy prevailed, or to whatever extent it did so, there might be several first-born of mothers, in the same family, and yet only one first-born of the father and the mother both. Certainly this supposition seems most consistent with the instructions for the census, given in Num. iii. 40, 41. If it be inadmissible, then there must be supposed many "first-born" in the same family, and a father might speak with propriety of his five or six *first-born* sons! A phrase in-

consistent, at least, with the legal and technical sense in which the term is used, when determining the rights of primogeniture, in the case of the first-born of two separate wives (Deut. xxi. 15, 17).—Michaelis, however, must go for nothing. Yet, his hypothesis is certainly probable enough to prevent any *candid* mind from being absolutely confident that it is false.

Again : Rosenmüller (no hot partisan of orthodoxy) and many others favour the conjecture that the HEADS of families, though they might be “first-born” themselves, were not reckoned among the “first-born;” and this *seems*, at all events, a not improbable thing in itself. Certainly, if such restriction were not acted upon, “Moses and the princes,” who conducted the census, must have had many odd and puzzling cases to decide. There is an old gentleman of eighty, for example, whose father and mother, having early left him an orphan, have been in the grave for more than half a century, and he does not know whether they had an infant son or daughter before him or not ; what is to be done with *him* ? Another of seventy, whose parents have been dead forty years, fancies that he has heard that his mother had a still-born child, but can’t be sure ; if not, he is a first-born. Another of sixty had a twin-sister, but which of them came into the world first he cannot say, father and mother, doctor and nurse, having long

since gone the way of all flesh.—If any one were asked to find out how many living first-born sons there were in the families of a village, I rather think it would not strike him to set down old men of seventy or eighty, who had been first-born sons, but whose fathers had been buried a score or two of years before, and who had first-born sons of their own in the prime of life. However, though this principle would seem a tolerably reasonable one, it is as summarily set aside, for no reason that I can find, except the usual and all-sufficient one—it will mitigate a difficulty.

Another element for diminishing this objection is the fact mentioned by Kurtz, that the “first-born,” according to the law of population, is more frequently a *girl* than a *boy*; and that, therefore, the proportion in which there would be first-born sons would suffer a further diminution. Will it be believed that, in his eager desire to throw aside everything that can be urged in favour of the Pentateuch, our critic seems to hint a doubt whether *this* natural law can have operated among the children of Israel:—“But in the case of the Hebrews, according to the story in the Pentateuch (whatever may be the case generally), the first-born was much more frequently a male than a female” (p. 86). This is pretty well in one who, everywhere else, proceeds only too absurdly to judge, in those far distant

times and regions, by modern parallels, and to adjust everything to the meridian of *London* and the nineteenth century. However, I daresay he knows well enough the greater importance attached to the *male* progeny throughout the whole of the Old Testament, and that it by no means implies that there were more sons than daughters, because the latter are less frequently mentioned. We should never have known that Moses had an elder sister, and that neither he nor Aaron was a "first-born," had it not been for the narrative of his rescue by Pharaoh's daughter.

I do not indeed intend to say, that all, or any, of these elements of solution may be regarded as demonstrably true; I only say that they are very probable, and, coming from such men as they do, no impartial investigator of truth, no man with the slightest particle of modesty, would summarily dismiss them all, as not "of any use whatever for the purpose of relieving the difficulty!"

But let us look at the results obtained from his own data. The males of twenty and upwards, he says, were 600,000, and we must add about 300,000 for those under that age; about 900,000 in all. Very well; then divide 900,000 by 22,273, the number of the first-born, and it follows, it seems, that each mother must have had, on an average, more than forty sons! Our author

says 42, or as he more correctly puts it, 44 ; but then he takes Kurtz's rough guess as to the males being 1,000,000. It is all guess work, to be sure ; but the higher the number, the more startling the absurdity our author brings out ; and this seems to have been his only reason for preferring 1,000,000 to 900,000, as the basis for calculating Hebrew fecundity. If one takes 900,000, it will give forty and a fraction,—if we must fall in with our author's exact humour ; but if a woman has forty children, the fraction, I suppose, is of little consequence, more or less. Now, it is true that, according to this calculation, there might be, on an average, only one first-born to more than forty males ; but it remained for this critic to suppose that that is the same thing as saying that every *mother* must have had more than forty sons ! For what can be more ridiculous than such a calculation ? All it shews is that our author can at least work a long division sum ; that 900,000, divided by 22,273, will give some such result approximately. But is it not obvious, that since every family in which the “first-born” son was dead, however numerous the *rest* of the males ; every family in which the first-born was a daughter, however numerous the *brothers* ; every family in which the infant, though a male, was under a month old ; and every family in which the eldest was the son of a widow, were, as regards this census, thrown out of

the reckoning altogether, though their males formed *part of the population*, the number of mothers cannot be the same with the number of the first-born sons? All the males, our wise critic says, must be placed under *one or other of the mothers of these 22,273!* What makes the fallacy more ridiculous is, that he has in this very chapter suggested the two principal exceptions. "Except," he says, "of course, any cases where the first-born of any family was a *daughter*, or was *dead*, of which we shall speak presently," p. 84. Except! But these exceptions vitiate the whole calculation, and if set aside, will allow us to say that every English mother has, at least, from twenty to thirty children; ten or fifteen sons, and ten or fifteen daughters! If any one will take the trouble to calculate among any one hundred families, even on this writer's premises, he will find the result will a little surprise him.—I will try it upon a chance case. There are five families, all within about a stone's cast of where I am writing, and presenting about the varieties we generally find in our population. The first family consists of twelve,—seven sons and five daughters; but the eldest is a *daughter*; the second consists of four sons only, and the eldest being a son, there is therefore *one* first-born; the third, of six,—five sons and one daughter, but the daughter again the eldest; the fourth,—of

three sons and one daughter, but there was another, a son who was still-born. The fifth, a couple who were recently married, and have one little boy, but under a month old. Of the five fathers, an old gentleman of near seventy is also a first-born ; and if, as Michaelis and Rosenmüller conjecture, he ought *not* to be reckoned, (I think he *could* prove that he was a first-born, if put to it), here are, counting the five fathers, twenty-five males ; and, counting the five mothers, thirteen females ; —thirty-eight of the population, and only one first-born among them ; and, according to the reasoning of this critic—that “each of the males must have had one or other of the first-born males as the first-born of his own family”—the mother of *this* first-born had twenty-five sons ! Even if the first-born *father* be reckoned, there will be but two “*first-born*” to thirty-eight of the population. Some scribblers in our more scurrilous prints (as this reckless writer might have anticipated) have made themselves very merry with his grotesque deduction as to the prolific character of the Hebrew mothers ; they may, on similar principles, make merry with their own ; and prove that every English mother is (to use Burke’s classical allusion on another subject) “the sow of imperial augury,” with her litter of thirty offspring about her.

It may be said, perhaps, that it is not so absurd to

represent every English mother with ten or fifteen sons (besides daughters), as to represent her with forty sons. Why, no; but impossibilities of *any* dimensions are equally good for a *reductio ad absurdum*; and shew clearly that the principle which leads to them must be an absurd one.

Our critic has the effrontery to add, that though every family which has a daughter for a first-born is to be deducted in the manner above mentioned, it will not affect the calculation; that if an equal number of first-born daughters be supposed, then there will be in all 44,546 first-born (sons and daughters) in all, and each mother will still have forty-two children—twenty-one sons and twenty-one daughters.

He forgets that if he has to deal with the first-born “daughters” as with the “sons,” then every family into which a *son* is first born, (however numerous the daughters), will be, though doubtless it had a mother, as though it had none; as also, every family in which the first-born, if a daughter, is *dead*, or any in which the first-born, when a daughter, is *under a month*; that is, we shall not have in either case the true number of the mothers at all determined by taking the number of first-born sons or first-born daughters, *on the principle of this census*.

If, now, every first-born taken in families,—exclud-

ing the heads,—would, even in our country, represent from twenty-five to thirty of the population, how would it be if we had polygamy among us, and only he who was “first-born” *both* of father and mother was reckoned? and if also we had had a Pharaoh for a few years, making a massacre of the *male* children for the purpose of keeping down the population? The author allows that this last *might* tell on the result, and he makes a perfectly arbitrary and precarious deduction for it. We know not *what* the deduction should be, and therefore any such ratio is perfect guess-work; but it is not unreasonable to infer that the number of “first-born” might represent in such a case not only twenty, but double the number of the male population.*

It is not the part of the Pentateuch to teach us social statistics; but many facts are presented there, which are well worth further investigation as curious vouchers for the authenticity of the narrative. Thus the ratio of the entire number of the tribe of Levi, to that of the

* Rosenmüller's candid note on this subject is well worth reading. I cite a sentence:—“Vel hodie apud nos e septem, octo aut decem conjugiiis, etsi omnibus illis mascula prole numerosissimis, vix unum alterumve reperiemus quod primam prolem filium susceptum alat; reliqua omnia, quia in iis puella primi partus honorem præcepit, omni spe primogeniti alicujus umquam habendi, sunt exclusa. Neque tamen hæc sufficere ad difficultatem illam *prorsus* tollendam—.”

men between the ages of thirty and fifty, tallies with the ratio approximately established by modern statistics ; and as one can hardly imagine the authors of the *Pentateuch* to have been much versed in economical science, we can only suppose it the effect of downright counting, unless we suppose it an unique instance of a lucky guess. Whenever solitary facts of this complex character occur in ancient history, and coincide with the inductions of modern science, we have symptoms of truth in the records. I commend this class of facts to the scrutiny of some new editor of *Blunt* ; there is still a rich harvest of “undesigned coincidences” in the *Pentateuch*, awaiting the patience and sagacity of any one who knows how to put in the sickle. In stimulating such labours, our present critic may be of use. Nearly all the great works on the “Evidences” have been evoked in this way, from the time of *Celsus* to the present. Christianity has often been accused of obtruding its evidences : never was a charge less true. It would fain be about its proper business in the world, if the world would let it alone. From first to last, all the literature of the “Evidences,” has been “apologetic.”—

Yours truly,

VINDEX.

LETTER XII.

December 22, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIEND—The Conclusion of this book, were it not for the name on the title-page, would alone perfectly convince me, that it was written by one who had thoroughly abandoned all belief in the claims of the Bible to be considered a special Divine revelation. He places it on a par, as it appears to me, with any other so-called sacred books. All of them are to be considered equally inspired by the Divine Spirit, so far as they contain any truth—of which, again, man's intellect is the absolute criterion. In fact, the Old Testament and the New, the Koran, the Shasters, the utterances of the Sikh Gooroos and of the disciples of Ram, contain in various degrees truth and falsehood, and stand much on the same level.

That in every age there will be found men who have given expression to some sublime abstractions respecting the Deity, is very true; but if we suppose that any such vague rhapsodies of poets or sages will really be an instrument of moral reformation to mankind, we must have read the history of the world to little purpose. Though certain abstract truths, or approximations to truths, may have been occasionally struck out by

philosophers, they needed to be conjoined with other truths, and to be expressed in other forms, to render them capable of interesting the minds and enlisting the affections of men, or even of impelling those who had uttered them to attempt to give them diffusion or make them victorious ; and, consequently, the profound religious ignorance and gross superstitions of ancient Greece and Rome continued age after age, while the philosophers looked on in silent contempt, or (worse still) joined in the public rites with edifying solemnity of visage, but laughter in their hearts ; in short, lent their example,—more powerful than speculation, even if that had not been kept to themselves,—to perpetuate the popular delusions. As to any effect of the speculations of the Sikh Gooroos, or the disciples of Ram, or those of all the Hindu sages into the bargain, the condition, for ages, of the whole continent of India,—crowded with temples consecrated to superstitions equally senseless, filthy, and bloody,—is a sufficient answer. Our author seems to think, on the other hand, that those who despair of the Pentateuch, or even of the whole Bible, may turn to these “wise men of the East” with consolation, and fill that “vacuity of the heart” which the loss of their faith will occasion, by stuffing it with fragments of Hindu theosophy. If they have not Moses and the prophets, have they not the Sikh Gooroos ? If they have not the

New Testament, let them be consoled ; have they not the words of RAM ?

It is sad that the long experiment on behalf of "Deism," in the first half of the last century, should not have sufficed for us. It was preceded and accompanied by strong efforts to get rid of the historic credibility of the Bible, similar to those used now. The tendencies too of Deism then, as of Rationalism now, were entirely *negative*. Such systems may destroy, but they cannot construct ; and there they will always end. They may enable those who wish it to get rid of the Bible ; but they will not make people take up with the meagre dogmas of Herbert, or the equally meagre revelations of RAM !

And while the positive effect has ever been *nil*, even the negative effect has been always transient and superficial. Bolingbroke, in his "Letters on History," and in his "Philosophical Works," wrote against the credibility of the Bible, but especially of the Pentateuch, with a genius and eloquence with which it would be absurd to compare the miserable carping of a writer like this. He has been, no doubt, extensively read, but, spite both of genius and eloquence, he has been long since consigned to the "dust and darkness of the upper shelf ;" while the Pentateuch still remains, and speaks to the world in 150 dialects.

The present book, I fancy, will go where Bolingbroke and a host more since, have already gone. A few years will shew ; perhaps indeed a few months : for I see the author has announced Part II., and if he fulfils his promise, of telling us *how* and *when* the Pentateuch was composed, I predict that he will lose himself. He will sink into that huge “Serbonian bog, where armies whole have sunk”—the Documentary Hypothesis ; and flounder in the deep mud of *earlier* Elohist, and Jehovist, and *later* Elohist fragments. I know no reason why, if Moses be the author of the Pentateuch, he should not (especially in Genesis, where he had to do with events that occurred long before his time) have incorporated, under Divine superintendence, some fragments of previous documents. But when, with a view to discredit his authorship, or that of any one else in particular, critics attempt to sever completely the elements thus fused together ; to give a chemical analysis of the whole ; to shew precisely how many of these documents there are, and where each begins or ends, or rather where each bit of each begins and ends ; arriving at the conclusion that said documents may be either two, or four, or six, or even ten or twelve ; that they have been put together, like a patchwork quilt, and at some unknown epoch between the time of the Judges and that of the Babylonish captivity ; then, loud is the din of controversy, and in-

finite are the varieties of opinion. "I have found a fresh bit of the Elohist document," cries one great critic ; "though the word Elohim does not occur, I know it by the *style* ; it begins in the middle of the thirteenth verse of this or that chapter, and it ends in the middle of the fourteenth, just at the word—." "No such thing," cries a second, "it is clearly Jehovistic, though the word Jehovah is not there ; anybody can see that who knows the true genius of the writer." "You are both mistaken," cries a third, "it belongs to neither, as I have proved in a new dissertation of 150 pages. It belongs clearly to a *junior* Elohist." "I beg your pardon," cries a fourth, "it is nothing but a little bit of cement by which the final *redacteur* of the documents has here glued his fragments together." And when it is to be determined at what epoch these fortuitous atoms came together in the Pentateuch, equally edifying is the variety of opinion. "No part," says one, "can be as old as the Judges, that is, if there ever *were* any Judges." "At least," cries a second, "there is no trace of it before Samuel's time." "We must come down yet lower," says a third ; "Nathan or Gad may have had a hand in it." "Pure nonsense," cries a fourth ; "the Pentateuch was not known even in Solomon's time." "No, nor then," cries a fifth ; "we must come down to the time of the Captivity ; perhaps, if Ezra were alive, he could tell us

something about it." And so you have your two, six, or ten documents to choose from, and compiled at any period between the time of the Judges and the Babylonish captivity! "Pray, gentlemen, agree among yourselves," an ordinary Christian feels inclined to say; "it is impossible criticism can be worth much, which terminates in such endless discordances." One happy thing is, however, that whenever one of these theories is combated singly, it immediately crumbles to pieces in our hands. And no wonder, for the learned authors of all the rest, as well as the advocates of the ordinary view, fall upon it. And such, I predict, will be the issue in the present case.

If I may judge from one or two hints in Part I., I fancy our author will endeavour to prove that the Penta-teuch is a series of fictions, composed as a sort of Jewish "Library of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge," by Samuel or Nathan or Gad, or all of them; much as Æsop composed his "Fables," or John Bunyan his "Pilgrim's Progress;" that though they everywhere protest they are telling mere matter of fact, and somehow uniformly produce the effect that they *meant* to do so, and everywhere appeal to God that they speak in his name and by his authority, yet they really meant nothing of the kind at all: that, on the other hand, the Israelites, finding that all this was very delightful reading—though they, as well as all their forefathers, are branded and

libelled in every page, "are huffed and cuffed and disrespectit," are told that they will never come to any good, that they will always prove an "obstinate, stiff-necked generation," and will at length (which has curiously come to pass) be scattered among the nations, and become "a hissing, a byword, and a proverb"—yet were so tickled with this pleasant story-book, that they were somehow completely taken in, fancied it was their *true history*, and forthwith handed it down, without one sound of protest, doubt, or repugnance, to all future generations, as not only true in fact, but as divinely inspired! Here is likelihood, here is wisdom! I cannot say *Credat Judæus*, for certainly no Jew ever would or did believe such nonsense; credulous scepticism alone is equal to that.

Of course we Englishmen can have no difficulty about believing it, because we all see that John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," having been written for much the same purposes, and having been read with intense entertainment, and without any of the humiliating reflections which the Israelites must have felt in reading the Pentateuch, is now swiftly passing into the domain of history, and will by and by be unanimously handed down as simple matter of fact!

Seriously, however, I could as soon believe this as the above hypothesis. You will say, perhaps, "But how

could Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' be transformed into matter of fact, when he plainly tells us that he laid himself down, and slept, and as he slept, dreamed a dream."

Very true ; and so little chance is there of fictions passing into fact, that this fiction has not even got so far as to induce the world to believe that it was a "dream" at all. On the contrary, the world still believes that John Bunyan was never more "awake" than when he compiled his inimitable allegory. But, take any fictions you please ; however founded on fact, as is generally the case,—however instinct with genius, however depicted "in colours dipped in heaven ;" though the verisimilitude be such as to justify Aristotle's criticism, that fictions may be truer to nature than fact itself ; though, as the blundering Irishman said of a portrait, the picture may be more *like* than the original ; still, there is no tendency in time to transform it into history. The Iliad, the Greek drama, the Niebelungenlied, Shakspeare's historic plays, remain, age after age, immovably fiction, and nothing more. They are as little likely to pass into history as the shadow to become substance.

But critics will say, "Yes ; but it is in *quasi*-history, written in very remote times, in the twilight of thought, in an age of barbarism, that myth and history may be

thus confounded, and minute fragments of the former make a mosaic with the latter."

Very true ; but, 1. Those who plead for the *late* compositions of the Pentateuch, preclude themselves from any such argument. Hard dilemma ! They are anxious that it should be a very late composition, that they may get as far away as possible from the dreaded miracles, and allow time for ancient tradition or invention to crystallize into myths ; forgetting, that in avoiding this Scylla, they have fallen into Charybdis, and encumber themselves with the unprecedented phenomenon of a huge fiction, composed far down in the history of a nation, being accepted by that whole nation as its true history. 2. That while the *quasi*-histories, written in the dawn between barbarism and civilization, may contain fragments of a mythical character, the instant tendency of even an infant criticism is ignominiously to expel them ; they rarely abide a cursory examination even among the nation that gave them birth ; least of all can maintain a footing (as the Pentateuchal history has done), amongst alien races, and far distant ages and nations. 3. These fragments are comparatively minute and insignificant, and, as Bolingbroke says, are easily detached from the history, leaving the general current of events undisturbed. But, as he also acutely observes, if you take away the miraculous elements from the

books of Moses, all the rest vanishes with them ; the ordinary events are inextricably entwined with and grow out of them. Take away the miracles, and you take away all ;—" if it be not a miraculous history, it is a history of nothing." 4. I suppose no reader of common sense, taste, and candour, will easily prevail upon himself to believe, that the literary characteristics of the Pentateuch are such as are ever found in any chroniclers of mythical and legendary history the world has yet seen. These last soon find their proper place, even in the nation that has produced them, and seldom provoke more than a yawn in the readers of any other nation. On the other hand, the spell of the Pentateuch, as that of the Bible generally, has been, and still is, upon the most various races, and exerts its potency upon the most refined and cultivated intellects, as well as upon the most rude ; upon intellects which make no difficulty whatever in instantly freeing themselves from all other myths, ancient or modern.

I have now given you some of my reasons for presuming that Bishop Colenso cannot be the author of the book ascribed to him. If, in spite of all, he is, I shall never more be troubled with any of the alleged paradoxes of the Pentateuch, for they are, to me, immeasurably lighter.—Believe me, my dear friend, yours truly,

VINDEX.

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